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Seeing double . . . Rob Frain with Peter Kay

Peter Kay look-a-like shares spotlight with star

AN IT manager who is often teased for his startling resemblance to comedian Peter Kay, ended up on the same stage as his look-a-like hero!

For years Burscough Priory Science College staff member Rob Frain has had to endure endless shouts of 'garlic bread', 'Cheesecake', renditions of '(Is This The Way to) Amarillo' and a whole host of Kay's famous one-liners because of his uncanny resemblance to the Bolton funny man.

Fellow staff members and pupils at the school in Trevor Road regularly remark about the likeness, leaving Rob no choice but to embrace the role - even performing *Amarillo* at a recent concert to delight the audience!

Now he has met Peter face-to-face on stage at an event in Blackpool, with the comedian inviting Rob on stage after learning of the likeness.

Rob had submitted an audience question prior to the show asking Peter: 'I often get mistaken for you; I want to know do you ever get annoyed when people shout garlic bread or cheesecake?'

A delighted Peter read out the

Continued inside

VINDICATED!

Aughton businessman cleared of fraud speaks of relief after four years of "pressure, stress and worry"

Report by **Lynda Roughley**

A BUSINESSMAN has spoken of his relief at being "vindicated" after being cleared of fraudulently pocketing hundreds of thousands of pounds of government money.

Steve Konetske, of Holt Coppice, Aughton, had been on trial at Liverpool Crown Court along with business partner Graham Stewart and Essex businesswoman Jodie Foster.

However, on Monday (December 5) prosecuting counsel David Potter offered no further evidence and all three were found not guilty on the judge's directions and discharged from the dock.

Afterwards 46-year-old Mr Konetske said that the allegations that had been hanging over him for four years had been shown to be unfounded.

Damaging

The father-of-two and grandfather-of-one, told the Champion that it had been "deeply stressful" for him and his family and also very damaging for his professional reputation.

Mr Konetske, who runs several businesses, said: "It has been absolutely awful, it's put so much pressure, stress and worry on my family, myself and the other two defendants.

"We've been as co-operative as possible since the very start and it's absolutely ridiculous that it wasn't just sorted out at the beginning.

"It shouldn't have got this far as there is absolutely no evidence as it's not true.

"The case fell apart day by day as you could clearly see there had been no wrongdoing.

"A lot of people have been in touch to offer me support but I am so worried that it has been damaging for my reputation as a businessman.

"I've always maintained my innocence and now I've been vindicated. Dwelling on the whole experience would just make me bitter, I want to put it behind me and move on."

The jury had heard that the allegations involved Skillswork Fund money earmarked to help small and medium businesses on Merseyside grow and prosper by paying for training.

The fund, ran from 2007 to January 2011 and the prosecution had alleged that the defendants had targeted the local hair and beauty industry and ridden roughshod over strict rules designed to prevent fraud.

Ms Foster was sole proprietor of Time Training when the alleged offending began in March 2008 and was "firmly connected" with Mr Stewart, her then partner, and Mr Konetske, a close friend and business partner of Stewart.

Mr Konetske denied one fraudulent trading offence; 39-year-old Foster, of Lindens, Loughton, Essex denied two fraudulent business offences; and Mr Stewart, 43, of Deauville Road, Aintree pleaded not guilty to fraudulent trading and aiding and abetting Ms Foster.

Time Training became Time Training Ltd in May 2008 and all three defendants "as directors, engaged in fraudulent trading," Mr Potter had claimed.

"As a result of their fraudulent activity a huge amount of public money was paid over to Time Training, in both its guises, for training that was either non-existent, grossly overpriced or fraudulently obtained," he alleged at the beginning of the trial.

However after a string of prosecution witnesses had been called to give evidence and before the prosecution case finished the Crown decided to offer no further evidence.

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CCTV helping to keep borough safe in run-up to Christmas

WEST Lancs Council and its partners say they are working to ensure shoppers and visitors coming to the borough are safe in the run-up to Christmas.

The council's CCTV system watches over the borough and provides reassurance to the community, as well as being a valuable crime-fighting tool for the police.

The cameras are monitored 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and operators are providing valuable assistance in preventing and solving crime.

In 2015/16 the CCTV unit was involved in 5,110 incidents.

In addition to the 337 arrests that the CCTV operators assisted with, a number of the incidents also resulted in the police or PCSOs being able to intervene at an early stage to prevent trouble from escalating into something more serious.

Between November 2015 and November 2016, the operators played a key role in increasing road safety by advising the police of 84 incidents involving suspected drunk drivers.

Operators keep in close contact with local businesses and the police through the Shopwatch radio scheme, meaning officers can be alerted and respond to any incident as quickly as possible.

Councillor Kevin Wright, West Lancs Council's portfolio holder for community safety

For more information on CCTV in West Lancashire please visit www.westlancs.gov.uk/cctv.

Councillor Kevin Wright, the council's portfolio holder for health and community safety, said: "Crime is low in West Lancashire and we want to keep it that way. Our CCTV system provides excellent value for money in playing a significant role in helping to achieve that.

"With Christmas around the corner we want people to feel safe when they are shopping or enjoying an evening out.

"I am particularly pleased to see the role that CCTV plays in relation to drunk drivers. Driving under the influence of alcohol is a crime and is extremely dangerous. You could injure or kill yourself or others. Please leave your car at home this Christmas."

Responsible

Dave Tilleray, West Lancashire Community Safety Partnership chairman, commented: "We want everyone to enjoy themselves this Christmas but we would also encourage people to help themselves by behaving in a responsible manner and looking after their own personal items."

And West Lancashire police Inspector June Chessell added: "The CCTV system is a powerful tool that will assist in not only preventing crime but enable my staff to identify the small minority who are intent on committing crime or anti-social behaviour. We will be working closely with our partners over the festive period to ensure a Happy Christmas is had by all and that people feel safe."

There are currently 107 public open space cameras across the borough, including Ormskirk town centre and various key locations.

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Ball's £50,000 boost for young people's charity

A SPECIAL fundraising ball has given a staggering £50,000 boost to a West Lancashire-based charity for children and young people with disabilities.

The Rainbow House Las Vegas Ball, held at the Guild Hall in Preston, raised much-needed funds for the Mawdesley charity, which provides conductive education, rehabilitation, education and fun for children, young people and adults with neurological conditions, including cerebral palsy, brain injuries and genetic conditions.

The charity receives no government funding and is completely reliant on donations, grants and fundraising events to raise the £10,000 a week needed to finance and develop its services.

At the ball more than 300 guests enjoyed a three-course dinner and live entertainment before taking part in an auction boasting fantastic prizes including a shooting package on the edge of the North Yorkshire Moors; four tickets to the IAAF World Para Athletic Championships 2017; fine dining for 10; an executive box for 10 at Preston North End football club; a 10-day holiday at a villa in Cyprus and two tickets for the 2017 Open Championships at Royal Birkdale.

There was also a raffle with more than 70 prizes including blankets and hampers, spa days, wine and chocolates.

Mayor to attend public speaking event

MAYOR of West Lancs, Councillor Liz Savage and her consort, Councillor Noel Delaney will attend a public speaking event being staged at the Creative Edge Theatre at Edge Hill University tomorrow (Thursday, December 8) at 4.15pm.

MP welcomes flood early-warning plan

by **Danielle Thompson**

WEST Lancs MP Rosie Cooper has welcomed progress being made in forming an early-warning system for residents at risk of flooding.

The new system, being created by the Environment Agency, will warn Ormskirk residents living in Hurlston/Dandy Brook area, giving them time to prepare and protect their homes.

Rain gauges set up around Ormskirk will monitor rainfall and this will enable the agency to set rainfall alerts. They are also aiming to monitor the brook located on Dyers Lane, with alerts given based on the level of this.

Using the monitoring information will enable the agency to develop flood forecasts to provide more accurate and timely warnings.

West Lancs MP Rosie Cooper

The warnings will also give an indication of possible surface water flooding.

The new system will provide greater coverage across Ormskirk and not just be restricted to areas affected by river flooding.

Ms Cooper said: "This is a very welcome development in improving how the emergency response to flood threats gives residents a chance to prepare. It is an example of how agencies and communities can and should be working together.

"Many Ormskirk residents' homes have been hit by floods on a number of occasions. Improving the warning systems for all residents is one of the ways agencies need to get smarter to better protect local communities."

Residents will be able to sign up to receive warnings by phone call, text and email.

The Environment Agency aim to have the full flood warning system in place from late February, 2017.

Audience 'see double' as Rob takes to stage with TV comic

From Page 1

question before pausing to ask where Rob was in the audience and inviting him up on stage for a photo.

The audience cheered when the duo got together and took a photograph – with Rob saying he was delighted to meet his hero!

Peter joked: "I hope he's not doing a tribute act! He'll be charging more than I do.

"The likeness is scary and I'm rather glad he's not enormous!

Rob, from Birkdale, said afterwards: "It was great to meet Peter as I'm a big fan.

"Although I was only on stage for a minute or two it was great to come face-to- face with him and grab a quick selfie!

"I had asked him if he ever gets annoyed by people shouting garlic bread or cheesecake to him because I get that a lot.

"Since I started work at Burscough Priory Science College 12 years ago the students and staff all say I look like him.

"I've even done *Amarillo* on stage in a concert a few years back!"

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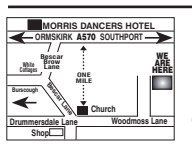

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Contracts double blow for hospital trust

Report by **Ollie Cowan**

SOUTHPORT and Ormskirk Hospital Trust bosses say they are 'very disappointed' to have lost out in the bidding process to run community health services in both West Lancashire and Southport and Formby.

The trust didn't even make the shortlist of potential providers for the West Lancs service and now it has been announced that the contract has gone to a private healthcare group.

Billionaire Richard Branson's Virgin Care will take over community health and urgent care services in West Lancs from April 1 next year.

And in a double blow, the trust has also lost the tender to run Southport and Formby community health services, which will transfer to Lancashire Care on May 1.

Therese Patten, chief operating officer at Southport and Ormskirk Hospital NHS Trust, said: "Last year the community services the trust has provided since 2011 were put out to tender. The trust was very disappointed that NHS West Lancashire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) chose not to select our bid when they announced a shortlist of potential providers in March.

"The trust did reach the shortlisting phase for community services in Southport and Formby, however NHS Southport and Formby CCG have announced that we were unsuccessful in that bid also.

"The trust's task now is to work with the new providers to safely and successfully support staff in the months ahead and ensure our patients and their families continue to receive good quality care."

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Katie-Anne's flowing locks get the chop for charity

A BIG-hearted pupil at a West Lancashire primary school has sacrificed her flowing locks to support a charity which makes wigs for youngsters suffering hair loss through cancer or other medical reasons.

Nine-year-old Katie-Anne Chapman, who attends Tarleton Holy Trinity CE Primary School, grew her hair to waist-length specially so that she could donate it to the Little Princess Trust.

Then she shed 12 inches of her pride and joy with a sponsored crop which raised £600 - surpassing her target of the £450 which it costs to make one of the wigs.

Above: Katie-Anne's flowing waist-length locks before her sponsored crop
Below: She sports her new-look and displays her plaited tresses

Proud

Delighted dad, Robert, told the Champion: "We are very proud of her, she is a kind-hearted little girl who likes to do things that make her friends and family happy. But to help put a smile on the face of another child who she will never meet has made her very happy."

And mum Tina added: "We have been totally blown away by the support and generosity, not only of her friends and family, but the local community. She has even received sponsorship from people she has never met!"

Sister launches renewed appeal on behalf of African orphanage

Report by **Danielle Thompson**

A NUN from Parbold is once again launching an appeal for donations to help orphaned children in Africa.

Sister Margaret Rose first went out to the Democratic Republic of Congo 16 years ago to help launch The Gorsilaure Project which takes in destitute children and gives them a home and schooling up to university level.

Run by Father Simon Lumbela at the Gorsilaure Children's Village in Qinsantu, Bas-Congo, the project also has a hospital with maternity and surgical units, as well as overseeing farming, food production and manufacturing schemes.

Although she returned to the UK after three years, 73–year–old Sister Rose, a member of Sister of Notre Dame congregation in Parbold, has continued to work for the project seeking to raise its profile in this country.

The Champion ran an appeal last December and enough funds were raised to buy food for the project, including a special Christmas Day meal of chicken and bananas.

Sister Margaret Rose, who is originally from Scotland but moved to Lancashire four years ago, said that the project is desperately in need of money to buy food for the orphans.

She said: "The Gorsilaure Project is beaming the light of hope into the lives of children who have only ever known dark despair, by providing a home and education for some of the countless orphans, as well as making education as accessible as possible for some of the poorest of the poor.

Father Simon Lumbela with orphans in the Gorsilaure Children's Village in Bas–Congo

"It is offering the means of survival itself to absolutely destitute people who live in a state of desperation and complete abandonment. It would, however, be impossible for us to sustain this wonderful work without a lifeline of support."

To make a donation, contact the project's finance officer Peter Harding on 01383 822540 or 07963 606 677.

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Pupils at St Mark's CE Primary School with some of the advent calendars that they donated to Ormskirk Foodbank

Pupils' sweet gesture to foodbank

GENEROUS pupils at a primary school have donated advent calendars to children who would have been without this year in the run-up to Christmas.

Staff and pupils at St Mark's Church of England Primary School in Scarisbrick have donated 60 advent calendars to Ormskirk Foodbank, which the school supports each week.

This is the third time they have held the collection, after first being inspired by comedian Jason Manford's donation of advent calendars to his local foodbank in 2014.

Samantha Spearing-Evans from the school in Southport Road, said: "The school tries to donate food on a weekly basis along with other items at special times of the year such as Easter eggs. Christmas is a very special time for giving and thinking of people less fortunate than ourselves.

"The countdown to Christmas should be an exciting time but often very stressful and worrying for families needing essential items such as food. These advent calendars are not a necessity when allocating the weekly budget but all children should have one. It is the children's wish that they add that little bit extra to another child's Christmas countdown in our community."

In addition to the advent calendars St Mark's are participating in the Christmas Toy Appeal by donating wrapped gifts to Merseyside Police who distribute these to children who may not get a gift this Christmas.

Iceland to open store on former Netto site

A NEW supermarket is set to open on the Hattersley Retail Park in Ormskirk in February next year.

by **Danielle Thompson**

Iceland Foods Limited have taken over the site of the former Netto store on the retail park which closed in August last year less than two years after its opening.

The Ormskirk store was one of more than 400 Netto outlets across the UK which shut their doors after Sainsbury's pulled the plug on their joint venture with the Danish discount chain.

The new occupiers are currently in the process of turning the unit into a Food Warehouse by Iceland store which is set to open on Valentine's Day, Tuesday February 14.

Work on the project started on at the end of November and should take about nine weeks.

Iceland launched its Food Warehouse sister project earlier this year. The company say it combines a cash-and-carry, bulk-buy format with the established Iceland supermarket style.

However, the stores are more than twice the size of Iceland's usual shops and are designed to have a "substantially lower cost base" than the traditional store.

The former Netto site is set to become a Food Warehouse by Iceland store

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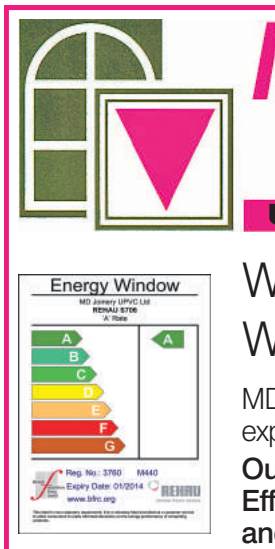

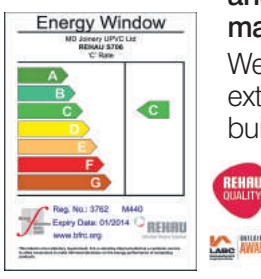

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County publishes flood risk management reports

LANCASHIRE County Council has published a series of reports on how flood management authorities are helping to manage risks in the run-up to the anniversary of the 2015 Boxing Day floods, which caused devastation across the borough.

The reports aim to provide information on investigations undertaken at each of the affected locations and flood risk improvements already completed, as well as opportunities for further investigation and investment in flood-prevention measures.

They also provide information for concerned homeowners and businesses on what they can do to help protect their own properties in the future.

The authorities which provided information include the county council, acting as the lead local flood authority, the Environment Agency, a district council for an area for which there is no unitary authority, an internal drainage board, water company and a highway authority.

The reports will be updated on a quarterly basis to allow affected communities to see progress and resolution of as many issues as possible, as quickly as possible.

All of the risk management authorities have been involved in gathering information about the individual causes of flooding in all 229 affected communities and potential measures to manage or mitigate the risk of future flooding.

County Councillor Marcus Johnstone, Lancashire's cabinet member for environment, planning and cultural services, said: "The December 2015 floods were the worst not just in living memory, but in the history of Lancashire. They affected more than 200 communities and as well as causing distress and disruption to homeowners and businesses, they also damaged critical infrastructure such as roads, bridges and electricity supply.

"The agencies responsible for managing the risk of flooding have been working very hard together to understand how each individual flooding incident happened and to take action to manage or reduce the risk of it happening again."

To view the reports go to http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/.

Flooding in Neverstitch Close in Skelmersdale after Boxing Day 2015

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Councillor slams opening hours cut at health centres

A BOROUGH councillor has criticised the decision to reduce the opening hours at the West Lancashire Health Centre and the Skelmersdale Walk-in Centre.

Councillor Adrian Owens, Our West Lancashire representative for Derby ward in Ormskirk, says the changes, which came into effect on Monday (December 5), could have a detrimental effect on the health of residents and ultimately prove more costly.

As a result of the change the West Lancashire Health Centre, based at Ormskirk Hospital, will continue to open at 8am every day but the last booking to see a nurse will now be 7.30pm instead of 9pm.

And the Skelmersdale Walk-in Centre, based at the Concourse, will open an hour later at 8am with the last booking to see a nurse also changing from 9pm to 7.30pm, Monday to Friday. The weekend opening times of 9am to 5pm remain the same.

The interim chief executive of Southport and Ormskirk Hospital NHS Trust, Iain McInnes, said: "Through a combination of sickness and vacant posts we are unable to fill, the trust has experienced a severe shortage of appropriate clinical staff at both walk-in centres.

West Lancs Health Centre at Ormskirk Hospital

"We have had no alternative but to adapt the opening hours to fit the staff we have available and maintain a safe service for patients. We will, however, keep staffing under regular review.

"Only a very small number of patients choose to use these services in the late evening but I want to apologise to anyone who is inconvenienced."

However, Cllr. Adrian Owens responded: "This reduction in opening times must only be temporary with the current hours reinstated in 2017.

"Our current survey of the use of the NHS by local residents is showing that 50% of them have made use of the walk-in centres because they have been unable to get a convenient appointment at their GP.

"Any permanent reduction in hours would impact still further on access to the health service for many people with the clear risk of longer-term illness and more costly care such delays in access entail."

The trust has said that anyone who thinks they need medical help outside the walk-in centre opening hours should examine their options.They advise that if people need medical help or advice fast, but it is not a 999 emergency, they should call the NHS 111 service. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and calls are free from mobiles and landlines.

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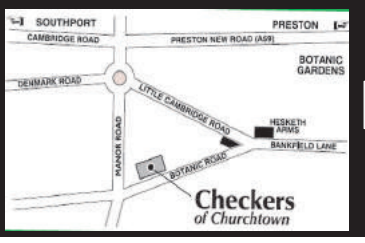

Opening Times

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Liberty Centre chief executive Eleanor Maddocks (left) with speakers at the launch of the 'Don't Be A Bystander' campaign including Cllr. Ian Moran, leader of West Lancs Council, Andrew Hill, West Lancs environmental protection and community safety manager, the mayor, Cllr. Liz Savage and Detective Inspector Geoff Hurst

Campaign launched to tackle domestic violence

A NEW campaign aimed at helping to combat domestic violence has been launched in West Lancashire.

Led by the West Lancashire Community Safety Partnership and the Liberty Centre - which provides support for women and children experiencing domestic violence in the borough - the 'Don't Be A Bystander' initiative was launched at the Briars Hall Hotel in Lathom.

The event was attended by the Mayor of West Lancs, Councillor Liz Savage, council leader, Cllr. Ian Moran, officers from Lancashire Constabulary and officials of the Liberty Centre.

The Community Safety Partnership were asked to construct a campaign that encouraged people who suspected a friend, relative or colleague was suffering from domestic violence, to get support, advice or assistance.

Officers approached the Liberty Centre as a partner to be involved in the campaign following the recent review of a case of a woman who was murdered by her partner following an argument, shortly after they had moved out of the borough.

The review involved numerous West Lancs organisations due to the couple's origins.

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Conservation award for Tree Bee Society

MEMBERS of a local beekeeping group are buzzing after being recognised for their conservation efforts.

Burscough-based community group the Tree Bee Society were honoured at The Bees' Needs Champions Awards, arranged by the Department of Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) held at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

Following on from their work this summer, removing both bumble and honey bee colonies from properties all over the UK and working on pollinator stations across Burscough, the local beekeeping group were nominated by Grow Wild, the UK's biggest-ever wild flower campaign.

Following their success in the 'Providing food and a home for pollinators' category, director Abigail Reade said: "It's fantastic to be recognised for the hard work we put in throughout the summers, removing and rescuing bees back to our field in Burscough and providing pollinator stations where members of the public can enjoy our local pollinators."

The Tree Bee Society also use the beeswax and honey from their bees to create natural, handmade cosmetics, such as hand creams, soaps, lip balms and even hair care products.

To support them in their conservation work or to see how you can help save the bees, go to their website www.treebee.org.uk.

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Burscough Priory Science College pupils learning CPR under supervision by one of the volunteers from the North West Ambulance Service and Lancashire Fire Department

Primary pupils learn vital lifesaving skills

YOUNGSTERS at a West Lancs primary school took time out from their regular curriculum to learn lessons in lifesaving as part of a national campaign.

Volunteers from the North West Ambulance Service and Lancashire Fire Department visited Burscough Priory Science College in Trevor Road as part of the British Heart Foundation's Restart a Heart Day initiative which aims to provide as many young people as possible with the knowledge of how to save a life.

They taught vital lifesaving skills including cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) to almost 500 pupils, who all had the chance to practice the skills themselves.

One of the youngsters, Year 9 pupil Sophie Hall, said: "It was the first time I have ever seen CPR being done. It was very helpful and I now know what to do in an emergency.

"I also thought it was interesting that CPR is taught in Norwegian schools and the rate of survival there is four in 10 compared to one in 10 in the UK."

£1.7m funding to fix county's potholes

THE Department for Transport has announced that more than £1.7million will be allocated for fixing potholes across Lancashire in the next year.

Officials say towns and cities across the country will benefit from £3 billion of investment on improving roads in 2017/18, aimed at resulting in quicker and safer journeys and helping to build a stronger economy by linking people with jobs and businesses with customers.

In Lancashire, £1,718,000 has been allocated to repair more than 32,000 potholes at an estimated cost of £53 each.

In addition, £20,514,000 has been allocated for the Highways Maintenance Block.

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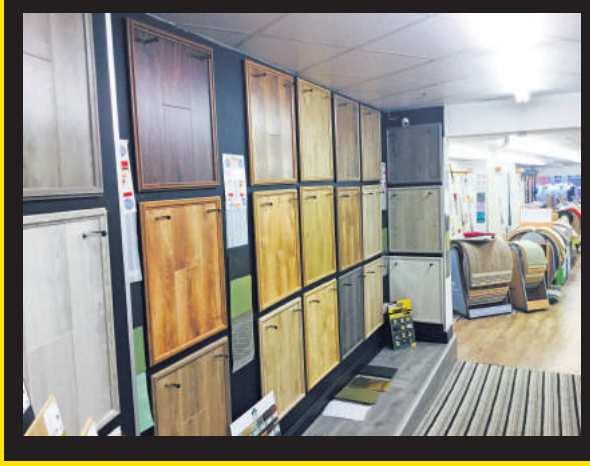

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Call to spare a thought for the elderly when the temperatures drop

RESIDENTS in the borough are being encouraged to help older people in the community during the cold winter months.

During cold weather older people are more likely to become seriously ill and more isolated and lonely as they may not go out as much.

Councillor Terry Aldridge, West Lancs Council's cabinet member with the portfolio for older people, said: "The winter months can be a difficult time of year for older people. I would ask that the wider community spare some time to think about older people living on their street or estate, who may not have any family living nearby, and offer to give them some help if they need it.

"This can be something as simple as seeing if they need any shopping doing, or any errands running.

"I would also urge older people to make sure they keep warm during the winter months. Older people are particularly vulnerable to cold temperatures. This can lead to serious health problems."

Councillor Terry Aldridge

Under the council's Winter Warm scheme, gas heating appliances including gas fires and boilers, can be repaired and or replaced, subject to certain conditions. The scheme is available to qualifying owner-occupiers who are in receipt of certain benefits, who suffer with certain health conditions and do not have a plan in place that covers boiler repairs.

For more information, including terms and conditions, visit www.westlancs.gov.uk/winterwarm. To find out if you are eligible, and to apply, contact the council's private sector housing team on 01695 585279, quoting the West Lancs Winter Warm Scheme.

The Age UK website offers a lot of useful advice for older people in the 'Winter wrapped up' section of its website www.ageuk.org.uk.

David Ward, spokesperson for Age UK Lancashire, said: "As an older person's charity we see first-hand how the winter months can affect older people's health and wellbeing. We are here to support anyone who may be struggling and offer information and advice on financial support as well as giving out thermometers and information about how people can keep themselves warm and well over winter.

"Anyone looking for help can call our 0300 303 1234 number or visit one of our offices in Ormskirk or Southport."

Church to host annual Christmas Tree fest

ST CUTHBERT'S Church in Halsall will play host to its annual Christmas Tree Festival this weekend.

A wide variety of traditional, quirky, weird and wonderful trees, provided by the local community, will be on display during the three-day event from Friday, December 9 to Sunday, December 11.

The trees will remain on display throughout the festive period so you can also view them at the church's Carols Round the Tree service on Sunday, December 18 at 4pm, which will also feature Marshside Brass Band and at the Christingle Service at 4pm on Christmas Eve.

Last year's festival was very well attended and raised £500 towards renovations to the church's spire. Donations taken this year will also go to the fund.

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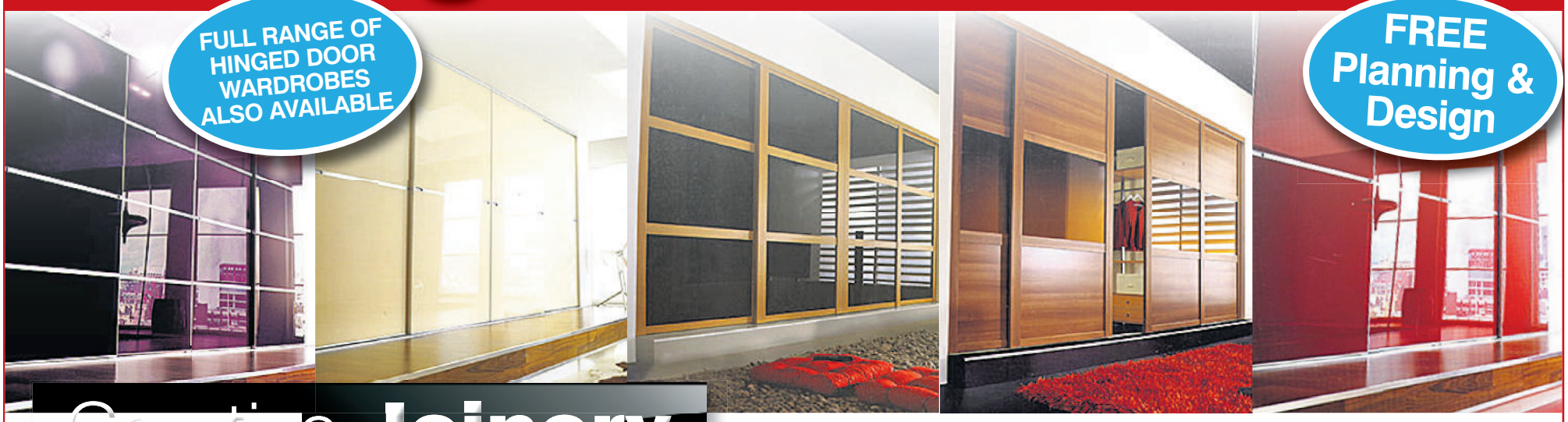
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Champion LETTERS to the Editor

Clare House, 166 Lord Street, Southport PR9 0QA
tel 01704 392 400 email editor@champnews.com

Skelmersdale is where we need 'affordable' homes - not 'affluent' Aughton

WITH regards to the 'Angry resident of Aughton' (Letters, November 30) complaining about the lack of 'affordable' homes in Aughton, perhaps they're failing to realise Aughton is not meant to be 'affordable', it is an affluent area and the houses are priced accordingly.

If anywhere should be given more homes, it is surely Skelmersdale.

The infrastructure was originally designed with a population of 80,000 residents in mind, yet only half that number live in the town.

If the council were to free up more land to developers, and cut red tape, we could see more homes for first-time buyers.

God only knows how many houses would fit on sites like Whalleys - the number must be in excess of 2,000.

Add to this the number of sites that the council haven't even considered for homes, such as Summer Street, Maryvale, Hart's Lane (which could easily join on to Stannanought island for access), the bottom of Inglewhite, and even the field lying between Cobb's Brow Lane and Beacon Lane.

More people in Skem can only be a good thing.

There would be more customers for the Concourse, more users of the proposed new rail line and more council tax being paid.

A. D., by email
details supplied

The problem of HMOs is a national one but local authorities can impose limits

I WRITE in response to Christine Spencer's letter of November 23 headed 'Why can't the council keep a record of student homes ?'

According to information supplied by West Lancs Borough Council to the New Ormskirk Residents Group (NORG) there are now over 430 student houses (HMOs) in the town's three wards of Derby, Scott and Knowsley.

There are also a small number of HMOs which have not obtained planning permission - houses with only two resident students which do not need planning permission, and students living in the town centre above retail premises and in purpose-built accommodation.

The residents of HMOs pay no council tax (unless one of the residents is not a student). For ease of calculation, if we assume that the majority of HMOs are in bands A and B (£1,059.47 and £1,236.15 payable this year) average payable £1,147.86 x 430 = £493,579.80 (almost half a million pounds of 'lost' revenue for WLBC and Lancashire County Council).

Suggestions have been made by community and residents groups in many parts of the country that HMO landlords could be charged some sort of business rate, but the fear is that they would pass on any charge to the student residents in the form of increased rent.

The problem is a national one and is viewed differently by different local authorities. Individual local authorities can (Oxford is one such case) impose a limit to the number of students living in family accommodation in residential areas.

At present the Government is consulting on 'Houses in Multiple Accommodation - licensing reforms.'

NORG has responded to this consultation.

Secretary, New Ormskirk Residents Group

PICTURE of the week

Paddington Bear prefers wellies but this pair belong to none other than international pianist and arctophile (teddy bear collector) Jena Pang who was invited to Burscough from his Southend on Sea home to open Pritchard's Teddy Bear Cafe last week.
Picture by Martyn Snape

Hospital patients deserve a better Christmas tree

I TOOK my mum for a chest x-ray at Ormskirk Hospital on Thursday, December 1 and we couldn't believe how bad their Christmas tree is.

Half of it was dying and the rest was neither use nor ornament.

They actually had the cheek to keep it stood upon a support. It looked like a spare branch that had fallen off a bigger tree, and the lights looked like someone had thrown them on.

The car park must make thousands every year, and we pay our council tax, so it wouldn't hurt to have a decent tree at the front of the building and even a few extra around the grounds to cheer up the people who have appointments or people who have to stay in hospital over Christmas.

Staying in hospital is bad enough, but staying in over the holidays must be so miserable. They should at least have a lovely tree and decorations to look at.

I realise the tree may have been kindly donated, but surely the hospital should still have bought a much nicer main tree.

Cheryl Finch, Scarisbrick, by email

Drop us a line...

■ IF you've got a view on a topic of local or national interest which you would like to share with the readers of the Champion, why not drop us a line?

Letters to the editor should be concise, preferably no more than 350 words, and should include the sender's name, address and contact details, although not necessarily for publication.

The editor reserves the right to edit all items submitted for favour of publication.

Correspondents preferring not to have their name and/or their address published may provide a suitable nom de plume.

Letters can be posted or emailed to the respective addresses listed at the top of this page.

PLEASE note: All views and opinions expressed in letters to the editor are solely those of the authors and are NOT necessarily endorsed or advocated in any way by Champion Newspapers.

Don't struggle with loneliness - we're here to offer support

WE'VE all felt lonely at some point in life. For some, it's a temporary feeling that we overcome, but for others it lingers and can seriously dent your confidence, as well as leave you feeling cut-off.

If any readers are struggling with loneliness, we want to let you know that we are here.

We're a local membership organisation that's made up of people from all walks of life and ages.

We know all too well how many major life events, such as a relationship breakdown, bereavement, redundancy, retirement, declining health or being a carer, can often lead to a sudden change in circumstances and prove difficult to adjust to.

So please, don't feel that you're alone. We run regular inexpensive events in the local areas for people to come along and enjoy some great company. They're nothing formal, just simple opportunities for local folk to come together, have a few laughs and, we hope, forge new friendships along the way.

We're a really friendly bunch and would love to welcome you to one of our get-togethers.

We're next meeting for a small coffee morning at The Lilac House coffee shop in Formby on December 13 at 10.30am.

If you'd like to come along, or you'd like to find out what else we have coming up, just give me a ring on 01704 545279 or email judith.catton@oddfellows.co.uk.

Judith Catton, events organiser, Ormskirk & Southport District branch of The Oddfellows

Climate change is greatest challenge

TACKLING catastrophic climate change is the greatest challenge of our times, so it is shameful that the Chancellor failed to even mention it in his speech.

A serious response to the situation we're in could have included a nationwide insulation scheme to keep people warm in their homes, (why hasn't every home got solar panels?) cut bills and create jobs in every community.

Why are we still forcing too many animals into too many airless sheds?

Factory farming is a major factor in climate change.

What we have is more of the same - a backwards-looking budget that fails to wage war on poverty and fails to grasp the realities of an uncertain world and the limited resources in it. Our fragile planet is fighting for life.

A.C by email

Nature gave its answer to fracking

NEW scientific ideas are normally tested and trialled before wider adoption , such was the case with fracking and test drillings near Blackpool.

Nature gave its answer with earth tremors and the trials were stopped.

Lancashire and Merseyside are very small but well-populated areas compared with other parts of the world where fracking is permitted.

Certainly fracking earth tremors can be monitored but how do we guarantee them stopping?

Concerned, by email, name & address supplied

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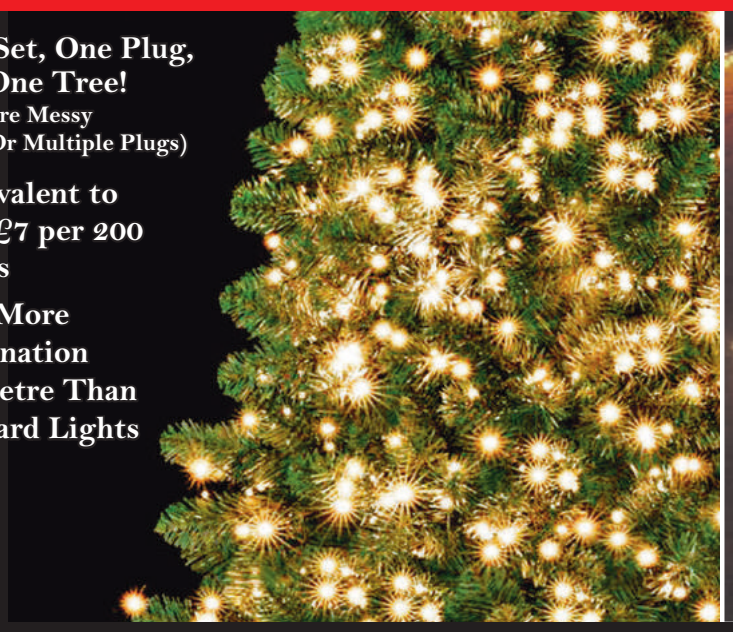

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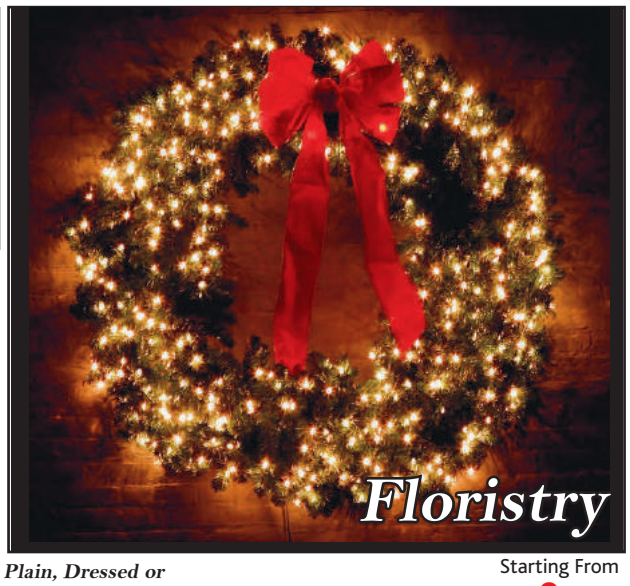

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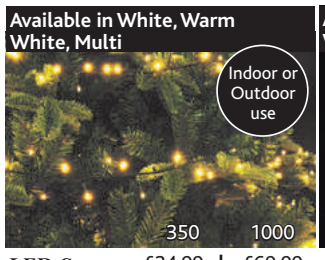

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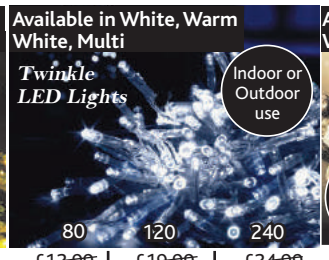

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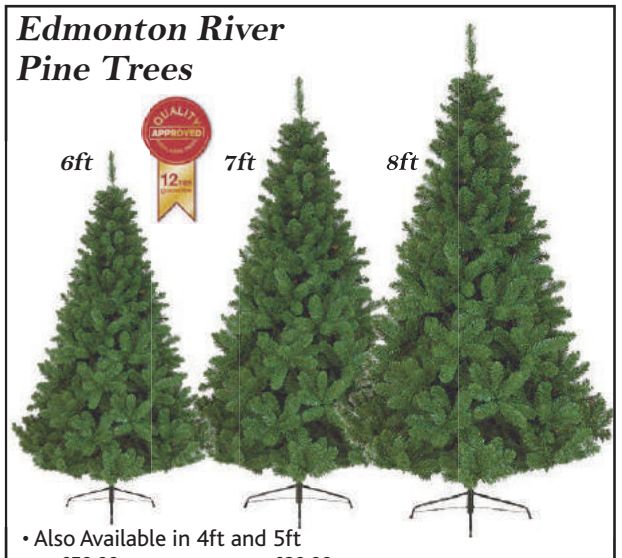

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Rosie Cooper with members of the Royal Mail team at the Ormskirk Delivery Office

MP goes behind the scenes as mail team get set for Christmas

EMPLOYEES at Royal Mail's Ormskirk delivery office entertained a special guest as they geared up for their busiest period of the year.

Rosie Cooper visited the New Court Way base to see first-hand preparations for the delivering of Christmas post and to pass on season's greetings to staff.

The West Lancs MP was shown around the site by delivery office manager, Brian Morgan, and was introduced to the postmen and women, who will be sorting and delivering mail in the borough over the Christmas period.

The festive season is Royal Mail's busiest period, as millions of people shop online for gifts and send Christmas cards and parcels.

Ms Cooper said: "At no other time is the hard work and dedication of postmen and women clearer than during the festive period. I thank them for the extraordinary lengths they go to ensure Christmas cards and presents are delivered to loved ones on time, and for all they do year-round."

Brian Morgan, commented: "It was a pleasure to show Rosie our Christmas operation and to hear her kind words of encouragement and support.

"We are extremely proud of our postmen and women for all their hard work during the festive season and for continuing our proud history of delivering Christmas mail."

Meanwhile residents are reminded that the last recommended posting dates for Christmas are: second class, Tuesday, December 20; first class, Wednesday, December 21; special delivery, Thursday, December 22.

Customers can also help Royal Mail ensure that all their letters, cards and parcels are delivered as quickly and efficiently as possible by taking the following steps.

Post early: Avoid disappointment by posting your cards and parcels early.

Use a postcode: A clearly addressed card or parcel, with a postcode, and return address on the back of the envelope, will ensure quick and efficient delivery.

Use special delivery: For valuable and important packages and parcels use Royal Mail's special delivery, which means your gift is tracked, traced and insured against loss; and wrap parcels well and always give a return address.

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If you elect someone to do a job - let them get on with it!

I HAVE a confession to make. I have started watching daytime TV - though almost exclusively confined to the Daily Politics and quiz programmes. Unhappily the re-run series of Hi-Di-Hi has finished!

But just this morning I tuned into a Channel 5 production, 'The Wright Stuff, which claimed to be a review of the morning papers but turned out to be a televised version of me at my very worst.

The eponymous Matthew Wright, of whom I know nothing, presided with what appeared to be a permanent sneer on his face, along with Dominic Holland and Yasmin Alibhai-Brown (I don't know either) to put out their opinions on everything including the tragic London tram crash. "Why aren't tramcars speed-limited?", asked good old Dominic, apparently forgetting that the corner on which the tram derailed is subject to a 12mph limit.

Was he suggesting that trams should not be able to exceed 12mph anywhere? If so, should all motor vehicles have limiters so they cannot exceed 20mph?

On every subject (though I admit I only managed to suffer about 25 minutes of the programme) you were subjected to these nonentities' second-hand views.

Now OK, you might say this was a case of the pot calling the kettle black, but one difference is that this panel were due to

keep up this drivel for a full two hours! And naturally, viewers were encouraged to phone, e-mail, text, Twitter and Facebook to add to the misery of the thing.

That's rather like saying that you should be subjected to my witterings on every page of each Champion and add a supplement into the bargain.

I have no objection to listening to the views of anybody who has some sort of expertise in what he or she is talking about. I might disagree strongly and verbally abuse my TV set in consequence, but at least I am receiving informed opinion, not the verbal diarrhoea I was listening to this morning.

Mind you, watching the Daily Politics programme in recent weeks has become a bore in at least one respect.

Politicians and political commentators just cannot keep away from whether or not the Government should publish its plans for Brexit. Now this would be fine if either side of the argument had a single new word to say on this issue. But they haven't.

My personal view on this is that we as a country elected the present Government only a few months ago and then, as a country, voted to leave the European Union.

So I cannot understand why anyone, save a 'Remainer' determined to derail the Brexit negotiations, should expect, or want, a running commentary on what the Government is planning.

To me this is yet another case of electing a body to run our affairs, yet seeming determined not to let it get on with it.

I have said the same thing about local government too. Assuming you even bothered to vote for your local councillors, then surely in general they should get on with the job?

Only for really important decisions (like a local Brexit in the form of the Green Belt for instance) should the elected council go back to ask if it should do this or do that. It really is akin to buying a dog and then proceeding to bark vociferously yourself.

Of course councillors should take heed of local opinion on any given scheme, but it is, or should be, still the council that makes decisions.

If you are going to have some sort of referendum on just about everything from should you have a waste bin here or there or what colour to paint the swings, then the whole point of electing a body of well-intentioned men and women is surely lost.

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Volunteers needed to monitor police

POLICE chiefs are seeking members of the public to take part in a project to check on the welfare of people in custody.

by Danielle Thompson

Lancashire's police and crime commissioner, Clive Grunshaw is looking for volunteers to become independent custody visitors (ICVs).

There are currently more than 40 volunteer ICVs in the county, who make random unannounced visits, in pairs, to police stations. Their job is to speak to detainees to ensure they are being treated properly and work with staff to resolve any issues.

Mr Grunshaw said: "ICVs are absolutely vital to ensure we continue to work to the highest standards. The wellbeing of detainees, many of whom can be quite vulnerable people, is very important and by providing impartial feedback our ICVs help to ensure everyone is treated fairly.

"People who find themselves in the cells may have underlying problems with things like mental health and substance misuse so it is vital they have access to the help they need."

ICVs are expected to carry out a minimum of 10 visits each year and the commissioner is looking to increase the number of volunteers to ensure detainees are treated fairly.

He added: "ICVs tell me they find their work rewarding because they have the chance to speak up for vulnerable people and make a difference to their communities. Volunteering is an excellent way to give something back to the community, gain new skills and improve your CV so I hope to see a wide range of applications from people of all backgrounds."

ICVs work with a partner and arrive unannounced at police stations. Their unique status means police must give them immediate access to the custody area, cells, detention rooms and charge rooms.

After the visit they prepare a report, a copy of which goes to the office of the police and crime commissioner and is forwarded to the custody inspector for any action.

● *For more information on volunteering, visit lancashire-pcc.gov.uk/get-involved/ or call Jay Nicholas on 01772 532251.*

Call to give blood this Christmas

WEST Lancs residents are being urged to give a gift with a difference this Christmas - the chance to save someone's life.

NHS Blood and Transplant is urging donors to make and keep appointments to donate blood this month, to ensure hospitals can continue to treat patients over the festive season.

Mike Stredder, director of blood donation at NHS Blood and Transplant, says that around a third of donation appointments remain unbooked in December; around 24,000 appointments to give blood are missed during the festive season; and throughout this month, the number of appointments cancelled by donors rises by nearly a third.

There is demand for lifesaving blood and platelets every single day and many children and adults will need transfusions over the festive period.

All blood groups are being asked to make and keep their lifesaving appointment in the run-up to and over Christmas, but vulnerable groups like O negative, B negative and A negative platelets are particularly important.

Mike Stredder said: "We need our amazing donors more than ever at this time of year. Please make a date to donate now. If you cannot make your appointment, please let us know as soon as possible."

To book an appointment visit blood.co.uk, use an NHS Give Blood app or call them on 0300 123 23 23.

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Information evening for potential adopters

LANCASHIRE County council chiefs are inviting anyone thinking about starting or growing their family through adoption to an information evening to find out more.

The event will be held on Tuesday, December 13 at County Hall, Fishergate Hill, Preston, from 6 to 7.30pm. Following a short presentation, members of the county council's adoption team, including social workers, will be available to answer questions, talk you through the process and offer confidential advice.

County Councillor Matthew Tomlinson, Lancashire's cabinet member for children, young people and schools, said: "We need people from all backgrounds to offer a permanent home and family to children unable to live with their birth family.

"You must be over 21, and live in Lancashire or close by, but whatever your race, gender, sexuality, living arrangements, age or employment status, we want to hear from you.

"What matters to us are your personal qualities and that you are able to provide a loving home where you can support and look after a child throughout their childhood and beyond."

Adoptive parents are needed for children from young babies up to eight years of age, and particularly for the following groups:

- Children aged over four, either gender.
- Children with special needs, disabilities or unpredictable medical issues.
- Sibling groups of two or more children.
- Boys of all ages.
- Dual-heritage children of all ages.

Further details are available online at www.lancashire.gov.uk/adoption or by calling the adoption team on 0300 123 6723.

There's no need to book for the adoption information evening - you can just turn up. Free parking is available on the Arthur Street car park, next to County Hall, and there is disabled access.

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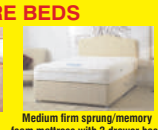

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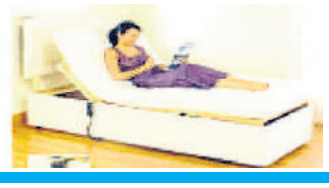

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County Councillor John Fillis and Gareth Collins, Lancashire's highways contracts manager with one of the signs

Drivers urged to slow down at roadworks

COUNTY transport chiefs are urging drivers to take more care when passing roadworks following a number of vehicle collisions and near-misses for workers.

Lancashire County Council's cabinet member for highways and transport, County Councillor John Fillis, has unveiled a new sign to remind drivers of their responsibilities to those whose job is to repair and upgrade our roads.

The prominent sign, reading: 'We're improving your road, slow down to protect our workforce' will be used at busy sites where the potential risks are highest.

Cllr. Fillis said: "We do all we reasonably can to protect our highways teams when they're working, but ultimately their safety relies on drivers obeying the speed limits in place, being patient, and staying alert.

"Unfortunately we do have problems with some people going well over the advised speed limit, and at one site alone in recent months there have been five near misses and three traffic collisions, any of which could have had much more serious consequences.

"People who work on the roads do not deserve to be put at risk, and I hope our new sign serves as a reminder to all drivers to take care when going through roadworks."

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Chance for youngsters to join Junior Rangers at free festive events

THERE'S an opportunity for children aged between five and 12 to have fun making their own Christmas decorations this weekend.

West Lancs Council's Parks and Countryside Ranger Service have organised a number of free events where youngsters will be able to use materials harvested from local parks with the Junior Rangers Club to produce their festive creations.

These are being held on Saturday, December 10 at Stanley Coronation Park in Skelmersdale starting at 10am, and at Richmond Park, Burscough from 1pm; and on Sunday, December 11 at 1pm at Coronation Park, Ormskirk.

Councillor Yvonne Gagen, West Lancs Council's portfolio holder for leisure, said: "Junior Rangers events are always a lot of fun and this will be a great way to get into the festive spirit, so make sure you book a place for your child."

Booking is essential to avoid disappointment. For more details email beacon.park@westlancs.gov.uk or call 01695 622794. Please note children under eight must be accompanied by an adult when attending Junior Rangers events.

Cathedral carol concert date for civic duo

THE Mayor of West Lancs, Councillor Liz Savage and her consort, Councillor Noel Delaney will be guests at the Radio Merseyside Christmas Carol Concert at the Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King, Liverpool on Friday, December 9 from 6.30pm.

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Council urges: 'Don't fall prey to loan sharks this Christmas'

WEST Lancs Council is urging residents in the borough not to be tempted to borrow cash from loan sharks this Christmas.

Loan sharks are illegal money lenders who often target low-income families and although they may seem 'friendly' to start with, borrowing money from them is never a good idea even if your credit rating is poor or you only need a small amount of money for a short while.

You will pay far more interest than you would through legal borrowing and some loan sharks resort to intimidation and violence, while borrowers are often pressured into borrowing more money to repay one debt with another.

The borough council offers a free, independent and confidential rent and money advice service to council tenants. Advisers can help you with debt problems, and offer advice on how to manage bills, claim benefits, and negotiate debt payment programmes.

Councillor Jennifer Patterson

They can also advise on alternatives to loan sharks such as credit unions. Knowsley Mutual Credit Union www.knowsleymutualcu.co.uk is one that operates in West Lancashire. For more details visit www.westlancs.gov.uk/moneyadvice.

To use the council service you can call the team on 01695 585252, or email money.advice@westlancs.gov.uk. An appointment can be made to visit you at your home or at one of the council's customer service points in Skelmersdale or Ormskirk.

Non-council tenants can contact Citizens Advice on 0344 245 1294 for advice and support. Citizens Advice Lancashire West is based in unit 47 at the Concourse Shopping Centre in Skelmersdale, and their website is www.citizensadvicelancashirewest.org.uk.

Councillor Jennifer Patterson, West Lancs Council's portfolio holder for housing and landlord services, said: "The festive season is a time when we want to treat our family to nice presents or want to go all out to make Christmas Day really special.

"If you are short of money and struggling for credit then going to a loan shark can be tempting. But in the long run this can create massive problems for you and your family.

"So if you are one of our tenants please call our rent and money advice service to make sure you don't fall into the loan shark trap.

New chairman for hospital trust

SOUTHPORT and Ormskirk Hospital Trust have appointed Richard Fraser as chairman.

The experienced NHS boss succeeds Sue Musson who becomes chair of Lancashire Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust in the New Year.

Richard, who is also chair of St Helens and Knowsley Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, will serve in post from December 2016 to November 30, 2018

The appointment was made by NHS Improvement (NHSI), the national quality and financial regulator for the NHS.

Iain McInnes, interim chief executive, said: "Richard's appointment means we have an experienced chair in place to further support the stable leadership of the trust.

"NHSI will work with him to ensure he has support in place to conduct both roles successfully and independently of each other."

Born in Glasgow, Richard studied civil and mechanical engineering at university. His first senior job was site manager during the construction of the landmark oil storage tanks at Stanlow, near Ellesmere Port. He has more than 30 years' experience as a board director at a number of large companies.

Non-executive appointments to NHS trusts are made subject to the Code of Practice of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

Richard is entitled to receive a remuneration of £30,000 per annum. He has not declared any political activity in the past five years.

Richard Fraser

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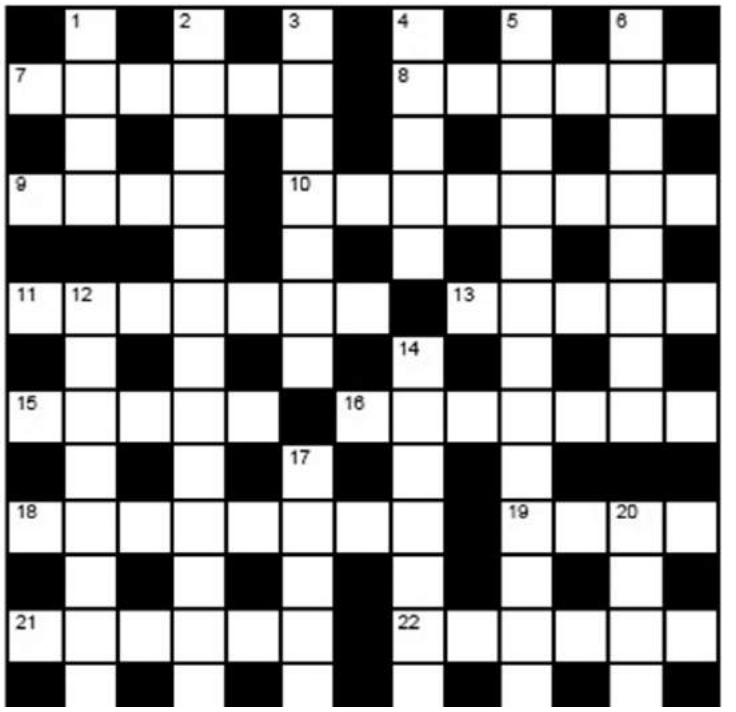

Last week's solutions:

Across: 7 Transatlantic. 8 Antimony. 9 Lane. 10 Toby Jug. 12 Breed. 14 Usurp. 16 Helping. 19 Arum. 20 Scavenge. 22 Acquired taste.

Down: 1 Iron. 2 Enmity. 3 Baroque. 4 Clwyd. 5 Antler. 6 Sinn Fein. 11 Obstruct. 13 Veranda. 15 Rumpus. 17 Pieman. 18 Astra. 21 Gate.

ACROSS

7 Cloth covering hung or held up over a bed (6)
8 Plant of the daisy family with yellow flowers from which a preparation to treat bruises is made (6)
9 Large heavy book or volume (4)
10 To become a pal to someone (8)
11 Police photo of a suspect's face (7)
13 Rogue or rascal (5)
15 Hard-wearing cotton twill fabric typically used to make jeans (5)
16 To be overly critical (7)
18 Mounted guns, cannon (8)
19 Suggestion (4)
21 Course of a meal (6)
22 Stable, dependable (6)

DOWN

1 Edible starch used in puddings (4)
2 Enterprises likely to make a profit (5-8)
3 Strip of hair above the eye (7)
4 Informal term to describe someone who is silly or mildly eccentric (5)
5 Disorderly (13)
6 On a sound business footing (8)
12 Always right (8)
14 Refinement (7)
17 Derisive smile or remark (5)
20 Small whirlpool (4)

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Win! A fabulous Flowercard Christmas gift

THE Champion has teamed up with Flowercard to give EIGHT readers the chance to win a fabulous Flowercard Christmas gift.

Christmas is just around the corner, as is the stress of finding the perfect gifts for your loved ones! Fear not, we can help you find the perfect present.

The original Flowercard has been arranging flowers for over 15 years with nearly one million orders to date, so why not let them create a bespoke gift for your special someone this Christmas?

Each card from Flowercard consists of fresh flower arrangements created by their expert florists.

The arrangements are then set inside a gorgeous greetings card, which is printed from an original drawing or painting by British artists and leading designers.

They have many different products to choose from – you can explore fresh flower arrangements set in cards, tins, bottles, trugs or planters. They also offer chocolates! Gifts start from £15, and they are all personalised, unique and handmade with a water-tight guarantee.

Flowercard have a customer satisfaction score of 4.5 out of 5 on Feefo, so put your faith in them this Christmas to send a gift full of love, thoughtfulness and beauty.

Visit flowercard.co.uk to start planning your unique and personalised greetings today!

The Champion and Flowercard are giving readers the chance to win one of eight fabulous Flowercard Christmas gifts.

Winners will be contacted for details of who they want the gift to be sent to, or it can be sent straight to the winner - you choose. Winners will also have a chance to include a short personal message if they wish.

So, for your chance to win a Christmas Flowercard, simply answer the following question:

Where does mistletoe usually grow?

a) In a bush
b) On the branches of a tree
c) Up the garden wall

Send your entry to Flowercard Competition, The Champion, 166 Lord Street, Southport, PR9 0QA.

Please include your full name, address and a daytime telephone number, Entries, which should be on a postcard, must reach us by Wednesday, December 14, 2016. Our usual competition rules apply. Editor's decision final.

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Martin Mere news

ADVERTISING FEATURE

A WINTER WILDLIFE SPECTACLE AT WWT MARTIN MERE

Last week, researchers for WWT Martin Mere Wetland Centre have managed to GPS tag 9 Pink-footed Geese to get a better understanding of their migration and breeding habits. This is the first time that WWT Martin Mere has successfully put transmitters on Pink-footed geese.

It is obviously hard to catch a bird that can fly away at the whiff of a human but us conservations are canny folk and since the 1960's have been using a process called cannon netting. This involves firing a large net over the flock of birds. Once the birds are caught we take some measurements and put the all-important GPS collars on. These GPS collars will send the locations of the birds via mobile phone signal to which will allow us to plot it on a map. It will give accurate information on their roosting sites, feeding area but more importantly their migration roots and breeding grounds in Iceland.

Reserve Manager, Tom Clare, said: "at first glance these collars can look quite intrusive on the bird, but years of research and experience have shown that the birds can move around as normal, they don't impact their way of life and the data we get is invaluable. Soon there will be a web page where you can view the Pink-footed Geese locations, please keep an eye on our web page for further information."

In other news at the centre, Martin Mere has seen the return of one of our most famous Whooper swans: Sigrunn (X4H), seen during the feed last Friday.

In 2009, Sigrunn was one of the swans chosen to be fitted with a transmitter to learn about where swans go and how long it takes for them to get here. However in 2010, Sigrunn lost the GPS tracker it was found beside the house by the mere. The name Sigrunn is Icelandic and means 'Victory'. His migration in 2009 was: Set off from Martin Mere on 4 March 2009; Reached southern Scotland on 5 March at 10am; Stopped in Western Scotland on 6 March at 10am; Attempted to go out to sea on 7 March, but he had to turn back due to bad weather; Situated on Western Isles on 8 March, waiting for good weather; Set off on 9 March, arriving on 10 March at 10pm in Iceland and time for a well earned rest and drink. 550 miles in less than 24 hours.

Tom continues: "Ringing the swans give us a huge insight into their lives. You can come along to the daily feeds at 3pm and 3.30pm to see if you can spot Sigrunn."

WWT Martin Mere Wetland Centre is open every day (except Christmas Day) from 9.30am to 4.30pm during winter months and parking is free of charge. Situated off the A59, it is signposted from the M61, M58 and M6. The Centre is also accessible via the Southport to Manchester and the Liverpool to Preston line by train from Burscough Rail Stations. Visit the web site http://www.wwt.org.uk/martinmere/ to find out what's on all year round at Martin Mere and the other eight WWT Wetland Centres.

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Champion ENTERTAINMENT

Tchaikovsky classic is a festive cracker

The Nutcracker
Liverpool Empire
National Ballet
9/10

Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker, a beautiful production with the perfect Christmassy feel, is the ideal way to kick-start the festive season and to get into the mood for the holidays, *writes Danielle Thompson.*

The tale, performed at the Liverpool Empire by the National Ballet, stays true to the original – we see young Clara and her family welcoming loved ones to enjoy a lavish Christmas celebration at their London home when she is given a stunning nutcracker doll.

The same doll, our audience discovers, eventually saves her from the evil Mouse King and whisks her off to a magical world in her dreams.

The production team have done a wonderful job of creating time-specific Edwardian backdrops, including the glorious house frontage which open up into an ice skating rink complete with realistic skating – as a complete guess I can only assume someone has cleverly disguised in-line skates as ice skates!

Clara's bedroom window, backlit to look like dusk, complete with falling snow will give you the warm fuzzy feeling of Christmas, while the traditional scene of the children each opening their one handmade gift, reminds us of a more practical era when gifts weren't piled sky-high and children valued a single, cherished, well-made present.

The first half of the show, while beautiful, took its time to really get going.

However it set the scene well and the recurring battles between the army of young mice and the Nutcracker's dolls were fantastic.

Yet the second half was when the production really came into its own.

A special mention must go to Junor Souza as the Nutcracker and Lauretta Summerscales as the 'grown-up' Clara, who gave magical performances and a stage-stealing turn from Daniel Kraus as the Mouse King.

The general happy frivolity gave way to some breathtaking ballet performances and the trip 'around the world' showcased the very best of a company absolutely jam-packed with future stars.

A Christmas cracker slow to get going but finished with a bang!

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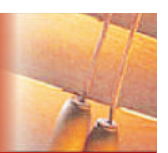

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• *Round includes:* Square Ln, Chapel Ln, The Poplars
• *Round includes:* Liverpool Road North, Orrell Ln, Victoria St, Mart Ln, Orrell Mews, Peets Mill

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• *Round includes:* Southport Rd (part), Bescar Brow Ln, Bullens Ln, Jacksmere Ln

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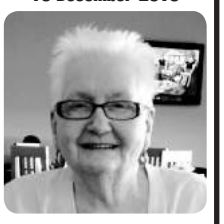
BIRTHDAY MEMORIAMS

TIMSON EILEEN & JOE
Happy 80th Mum & 83rd Dad
December 2016

Joint birthday wishes to the best mum and dad ever!!
We cant gather round your special birthday cake to mark your 80th birthday mum but you are never far from our thoughts, birthday or not.
We are lucky to have had many fabulously happy memories that we will all treasure forever.
Happy Birthday to you both.
Sending all our eternal love
Tony & Karen, Michael, Martyn & Rhona, Donna & Les and all the Grandkids and Great-Grandkids
xxxxxxx

BIRTHDAY MEMORIAMS

TIMSON EILEEN
Happy 80th Birthday Sister
10 December 2016



Miss our morning chats.
Thinking of you on what would have been your special day
Love Always
Maria & John
xxxxxxxx

BIRTHDAYS

LIAM HICKEY
11th December
CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR 21st!
Have a good day!
Love Mum, Dad, Stacey & Paul
xxxx

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FAIRBROTHER REGINALD DENNIS

Sadly passed away
22 November 2016

The family would like to thank everyone for their very kind thoughts and sympathy following their recent sad loss. Also Southport Hospital and Sutton Grange for the excellent care given to Dennis.
Grateful thanks to Bishop John for his words of comfort and lovely funeral service at Holy Trinity Church Tarleton.
Finally thank you to all the staff at W.H.Hull Funeral directors.

DEATHS

LEVENS ALMA

3rd December 2016
Peacefully at Aaron Crest Nursing Home surrounded by her loving family aged 82 years

Loving Wife of the late Bob, devoted Mum, cherished Nan and dear Mother-In-Law, will be sadly missed by all her family and friends.
Funeral service will take place at West Lancashire Crematorium on Monday 12th December at 11:30am, family flowers only please by request.
All enquiries Margaret Whitelam Skelmersdale Funeral Service 28/31 Sandy Lane Tel: 01695-559868

JENKINSON JOAN

of Westhead
Passed away 30th November 2016
Aged 90

Devoted Mother and Grandmother.
Greatly missed by the whole family.
Funeral Service at St James Church, Westhead, on Tuesday 13th December 10.30am followed by committal at West Lancashire Crematorium.
Family flowers only.
Donations if wished to North West Air Ambulance

DEATHS

BUTLER DAVID

Originally from Burscough.
Aged 61 years
Only son of Margaret and the late Jack Butler, brother of Pauline

Died peacefully in hospital on 28th November.
Cremation on Friday 9th December at 1.20pm. No flowers.
Donations to McMillan Nurses and Perennial.
Enquiries to Dean Brothers, Funeral Directors, Formby

GRAHAM ANNETTE

1st December 2016
Suddenly, aged 76 years

Dearly beloved Wife of John. Much loved Mother of Philip, Alison, Deana, Collette and John. Dear Mother-in-law of Terry, Eddie, Darren and Nyssa. Loving Grandma of all her Grandchildren and Great Grandchildren. Dear Sister of Queenie, Patricia, Dennis and all siblings who preceded her in death. A much loved Auntie of all her Nephews and Nieces. Netty will be sadly missed by all her family and friends. The Funeral Service will take place at St Anne's RC Church, Ormskirk on Thursday 15th December at 1.30pm, followed by Committal at West Lancashire Crematorium, Burscough at 2.30pm. Family flowers only by request please, but the family are gratefully receiving donations for British Heart Foundation. Further enquiries to Cookson Tyrer Funeralcare, 2 Smithy Walk, Burscough, Lancashire L40 5UU. Tel 01704 897770.

WAREING CONNIE

2nd December 2016
Peacefully in hospital
Aged 84 years

Beloved Wife of the late Ken. Much loved Mother of Colin, Pauline and June. Grandmother of Ruth, Glen, George and Jonny. Connie will be sadly missed by all who knew her. Family flowers only by request please, but the family are gratefully receiving donations for Macmillan Cancer Support. Funeral details from and enquiries to Cookson Tyrer Funeralcare, 2 Smithy Walk, Burscough, Lancashire L40 5UU. Tel: 01704 897770

DEATHS

FOWLER DOREEN JOAN

Nee Warwicker
25th November 2016
Peacefully in hospital aged 82 years of Skelmersdale

Wife of the late John, loving Mum of John, Mick, Damian and Chris, dear Mother-in-law of Jayne, Julienne and Lena and devoted Nan of Michael, Daniel, Jake, James, Aaron, Dan and Sarah. Funeral service at West Lancashire Crematorium on Friday 9th December 2016 at 1.00pm. All enquiries to H Hardman & Co., Independent Family Funeral Directors of Skelmersdale, Ormskirk & Scarisbrick. Tel 01695 722122/720012

DAVIES ELSIE

29th November 2016
Peacefully at Beaconview Care Home, Skelmersdale, aged 89

The dearly loved Wife of the late William, loving Mum of Lynda (deceased), June, Elaine and Bill, a dear Mother-in-law and a devoted Grandma and Great Grandma. Funeral service at St Helens Crematorium, today, Wednesday 7th December 2016 at 1.00pm. Family flowers only please, donations if desired for North West Cancer Research. All enquiries to H. Hardman & Co., Independent Family Funeral Directors of Skelmersdale, Ormskirk & Scarisbrick. Tel 01695 722122/720012.

ELLIS WILFRED VICTOR

30th November 2016
Peacefully in hospital aged 86 years of Skelmersdale

The dearly loved Husband of the late Win, loving Dad of Jill and Sal, dear Father-In-Law of Rob and Phil, devoted Grandpa of Gareth, Helen, Nathan, Simon, Sophie and Jasmine and Great Grandpa to William.
Funeral Service at West Lancashire Crematorium, Pippin Street, Burscough on Friday 9th December 2016 at 4:00pm. Family flowers only please, donations if desired for Queenscourt Hospice.
All enquiries to H. Hardman & Co., Independent Family Funeral Directors of Skelmersdale, Ormskirk & Scarisbrick. Tel:- 01695 722122/720012

DEATHS

DAVEY TED

29th November 2016 at Southport & District General Hospital

Loving Husband of June, devoted dad of Michael, Peter and Philip. Dear Father-in-law of Helen and Julie. Cherished Grandad of Tom, Jonathan, Rachel and Timothy. Will be sadly missed by all his family and friends. No flowers please but donations in lieu of flowers to St John The Baptist Church. Funeral service at St John The Baptist Church, Burscough at 10.00am on Friday 9th December followed by committal at West Lancashire Crematorium, Pippin Street, Burscough. All enquiries to Hunters Funeral Directors, 128b Burscough Street, Ormskirk Tel 01695 572997.

JONES CHRISTOPHER JOHN (CHRIS)

4.4.44 TO 30.11.16

Will be greatly missed by loving Wife Janet, Sons Richard and Tim and their families. Cremation for family and close friends at West Lancashire Crematorium on Monday 12th December at 12.15pm followed by a service for the celebration and thanksgiving for his life at 1pm at Christ Church, Long Lane, Aughton.
Family flowers only please.
Donations if so desired for The British Heart Foundation or the RNLI. All enquiries to Hunters Funeral Directors, 128B Burscough Street, Ormskirk.
Tel: 01695 572997

GUEST WILLIAM (Bill)

27th November 2016
Peacefully in hospital aged 71 years

Loving Husband of Ellen, devoted Dad of Carl, dear Father-In-Law of Kate, Cherished Grandad of Caitlin, will be sadly missed by all his family and friends.
Funeral service will take place at West Lancashire Crematorium on -Tuesday 13th December at 1:00pm.
Family flowers only please by request donations if desired for The British Heart Foundation. All enquiries Margaret Whitelam Skelmersdale Funeral Service 29/31 Sandy Lane Tel: 01695-559868

DEATHS

ROUGHLEY DOROTHY

23 November 2016

Aged 90 years
The beloved wife of the late Brian Green Roughley, devoted mother of David and Susan, dear mother-in-law of Deborah and Mark, and a very much loved grandmother of Christopher, Emma, Joseph, Daniel and James.
The Funeral Service will take place on Wednesday December 7th, in Digmoor Methodist Church at 2.45 pm, followed by committal at St Helens Crematorium.
Donations if desired to Digmoor Methodist Church.
All enquires to R Banks & Son, Halliwell House, Ormskirk Road, Pemberton. Tel. 01942 222156.

IN MEMORIAM

BRIDIE MCKENDRICK

11th December 2014

Always remembered with love

From Barbara and Chris
xx

IN MEMORIAM

JEFFERS TERENCE

11th December 2015

One year has passed us by Dad and we miss you more than ever.
What we'd give to say "Hiya Dad" in the same old way, to hear your voice, to see your smile, to sit with you and talk for a while....

So if you have your Dad then cherish him with care, for you'll never know the heartache until you see his empty chair.

All our love always
Dad
Trina, Lisa, Lee
John and Tilly.
xxxxx

Love and miss you so much Gag
Jennifer, Ashleigh, Kate, Megan and Jack.
xxxxx

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2/12/16

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PRAYERS

Sacred Heart

May the sacred heart of Jesus be adored, glorified, loved and preserved throughout the world forever.

Now and forever, Sacred Heart of Jesus, pray for us.

Saint Jude, worker of miracles, pray for us.

Saint Jude, helper of the helpless, pray for us.

Say this prayer nine times a day for nine days. By the 8th day your prayer will be answered. Never known to fail. Publication must be promised. **M.A.S.**

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN

Never known to fail.

O most beautiful flower of Mount Carmel, faithful Mother of the Son of God, Immaculate Virgin, assist me in this necessity, O Star of the Sea, help me and show me herein you are my Mother, O Holy Mary Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and Earth, I humbly beseech you from the bottom of my heart to succour me in my necessity.

(Make Request).

There are none that can withstand your powers. Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee (3 Times).

Sweet Mother, I place this cause in your hands (3 times).

Thank you for your mercy towards me and mine.

This prayer must be said for three days and after that the request will be granted and the prayer must be published.

M.A.S.

IN MEMORIAM

JULIE CARTER NEE MCFARLANE

23/7/1964 - 8/12/2008

Ninth Christmas without you,
In our hearts and thoughts forever,
Until we meet again over the rainbow,
Mum, Dad,
Alan and Nicki
xxxx

PUBLIC NOTICES

GOODS VEHICLE OPERATOR'S LICENCE

Richard Hilton trading as Abacus of 198 Bescar Lane, Scarisbrick West Lancs L40 9QT is applying for a licence to use Unit 9, Kestrel Place, Guys Ind. Estate, Tollgate Rd, Burscough, Lancs L40 8TG as an operating centre for 2 goods vehicles and 1 trailer.

Owners or occupiers of land (including buildings) near the operating centre(s) who believe that their use or enjoyment of that land would be affected, should make written representations to the Traffic Commissioner at Hillcrest House, 386 Harehills Lane, Leeds, LS9 6NF, stating their reasons, within 21 days of this notice. Representors must at the same time send a copy of their representations to the applicant at the address given at the top of this notice. A Guide to Making Representations is available from the Traffic Commissioner's office.

LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
(JACKSONS COMMON LANE, SCARISBRICK, WEST LANCASHIRE BOROUGH)
(TEMPORARY PROHIBITION OF THROUGH TRAFFIC) ORDER 2016

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Lancashire County Council have made an Order under **Section 14(1) (a) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984**, as amended, the effect of which will be to temporarily prohibit traffic on the roads set out in this notice.

1. No person shall cause any motor vehicle to proceed over the whole length of Jacksons Common Lane, in the borough of West Lancashire.
2. The prohibition will be operative daily from 0700 hours until 1700 hours on Monday 12th December 2016 to Friday 16th December 2016 or, until completion of the works within this period.
3. No alternative route for vehicles is available as Jacksons Common Lane is a cul de sac

The temporary prohibition is necessary to allow essential highways maintenance works to be carried out.

Authority given for this Order to be made:
Michael White, Network Regulation Manager, Lancashire Highway Services, 0300 123 6701 [Ref: HRiT16/08/5828/ARH]

www.lancashire.gov.uk Lancashire County Council

LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
(HIGHER LANE, DALTON, WEST LANCASHIRE BOROUGH)
(TEMPORARY PROHIBITION OF THROUGH TRAFFIC) ORDER 2016

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Lancashire County Council intend to make an Order under **Section 14(1) (a) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984**, as amended, the effect of which will be to temporarily prohibit traffic on the roads set out in this notice.

1. No person shall cause any motor vehicle or cycle to proceed over that length of Higher Lane, Dalton from its junction with A5209 Alder Lane to its junction with Lees Lane in the Borough of West Lancashire.
2. The prohibition will be operative from 0930 hours and 1530 hours on Wednesday 21st December 2016 or until completion of the works within this period.
3. An alternative route for vehicular traffic affected by the closure is via: Lees Lane – Appley Lane South - Appley Lane North – B5375 Appley Lane North – A5209 Hall Lane – A5209 Sparrow Hill – A5209 Parbold Hill – A5209 Alder Lane and vice versa.

The temporary prohibition is necessary to allow essential drainage investigation works to be carried out.

Authority given for this Order to be made:
Michael White, Network Regulation Manager, Lancashire Highway Services, 0300 123 6701 [Ref: HRiT/16/08/5742/ARH]

www.lancashire.gov.uk Lancashire County Council

NOTICE OF PROPOSAL
ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984
LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
(ALEXANDRA CLOSE, MANOR GROVE, SCHOOL LANE, SKELMERSDALE, WEST LANCASHIRE BOROUGH) (REVOCATION AND 20MPH SPEED LIMIT) ORDER 201*

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Lancashire County Council propose to make the above Speed Limit Order under Section 84 to the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, as amended, the effect of which will be to:

1. Revoke the "Lancashire County Council (Chapel House And Pennylands Area, Skelmersdale (Various Roads), West Lancashire Borough) (Revocation And 20mph Speed Limit) Order 2011" insofar as it introduces a 20mph speed limit on Alexandra Place.
2. Introduce a 20MPH speed limit on the following lengths of road:

a) School Lane U526, Skelmersdale, from its junction with Kiln Lane for a distance of 170 metres in a north easterly direction;
b) School Lane U517, Skelmersdale, from its junction with Kiln Lane in a westerly direction to its junction with Neverstich Road;
c) Manor Grove, Skelmersdale, its entire length;
d) Alexandra Close, Skelmersdale, its entire length.

A copy of the draft Order and associated documents for proposing to make the Order may be inspected during normal office hours at the offices of West Lancashire Borough Council, 52 Derby Street, Ormskirk, L39 2DF, and at the offices of The Director of Governance Finance & Public Services, Lancashire County Council, Christ Church Precinct, County Hall, Preston PR1 8XJ. Any representations or objections (specifying the grounds on which they are made) relating to the proposal must be made in writing and should be sent to The Director of Governance, Finance & Public Services, Lancashire County Council, PO Box 78, County Hall, Preston PR1 8XJ or by e-mail to tro-consultation@lancashire.gov.uk **quoting ref:LSG4\894.2529\RH3** before the 18 January 2017.

Ian Young, Director of Governance, Finance and Public Services
07 December 2016.

www.lancashire.gov.uk Lancashire County Council

PUBLIC NOTICES

West Lancashire Borough Council
Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 - Article 15

APPLICATION(S) FOR PLANNING PERMISSION

Application No: 2016/1203/FUL 6 No. new temporary access points, fencing and gates in association with laying of new raw water main under permitted development rights between Bickerstaffe and Scarth Hill at Various Locations Along Poppy Lane, Graveyard Lane And Liverpool Road, Bickerstaffe.
The proposed development affects a right of way to which Part III of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 applies.
Application No: 2016/1207/FUL Temporary access points, fence and gates to facilitate new raw water main between Dark Lane and Scarth Hill Lane at Various Locations Along Dark Lane, Ormskirk, Crosshall Brow, Vicarage Lane And Whiteleys Lane, Westhead.
The proposed development affects a right of way to which Part III of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 applies.
Application No: 2016/1211/FUL Temporary access points, gates and fence to facilitate new raw water main lay between Springfield WTW and Bickerstaffe WTW at Various Locations Along, Brookfield Lane, Mickering Lane, Prescot Road, Bowkers Green Lane, Aughton And, Billinge Road, Liverpool Road, Bickerstaffe.
The proposed development affects a right of way to which Part III of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 applies.
Application No: 2016/1218/FUL Erection of a one storey five bedroom house including an associated garden at Land Adjacent To, 67 Gorsey Lane, Banks.
This does not (or may not) accord with the development plan.

APPLICATION(S) AFFECTING A CONSERVATION AREA / LISTED BUILDING

Application No: 2016/1129/FUL A single storey extension to the rear of the property, extension to the front of the existing garage, internal alterations and adaptions to accommodate the needs of a disabled individual, realignment of the driveway and associated external works to create level access into the dwelling at Burley, 2 Sandy Lane, Aughton.
Application No: 2016/1183/FUL Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of replacement dwelling at Charlton, Quarry Drive, Aughton.
Application No: 2016/1188/FUL Proposed new garage and landscaping at Brooklands, 30 Parliament Street, Up Holland.
Application No: 2016/1214/FUL Change of use from 2 no. flats into 1 no. dwelling house. Repair and replacement of timber windows, internal alterations, demolition of outbuildings and flat roof extension to rear. Construction of brick porch to front elevation, side extension, detached car port to the rear of the property and rebuilding of chimney stack at Robinsons Farm, Cranes Lane, Lathom.
Application No: 2016/1215/LBC Listed Building Consent - Change of use from 2 no. flats into 1 no. dwelling house. Repair and replacement of timber windows, internal alterations, demolition of outbuildings and flat roof extension to rear. Construction of brick porch to front elevation, side extension, detached car port to the rear of the property and rebuilding of chimney stack at Robinsons Farm, Cranes Lane, Lathom.
The applications are available for viewing on the Council's website www.westlancs.gov.uk/planning. Alternatively, the application can be viewed during normal office hours at 52 Derby Street, Ormskirk and at 1st Floor, The Concourse, Skelmersdale. If you wish to comment on the proposal you can do so via the Council's web site, by e.mail to plan.apps@westlancs.gov.uk or in writing to Development and Regeneration Services, 52 Derby Street, Ormskirk, but these must be received within 21 days of the date of this notice quoting the application no. Any comments made will be available for public inspection.
Applications for Minor Commercial and Householder Development
In the event that an appeal is made against a decision of the Council to refuse to grant planning permission for the proposed development, and that appeal then proceeds by way of the expedited procedure under the written representations procedure, any representations made to the Council about an application will be passed to the Secretary of State and there will be no opportunity to make further representations.

John R Harrison DipEnvP., MRTPI Dated: 7th December 2016
Director of Development and Regeneration PDNOT926

PUBLIC NOTICES

Licensing Act 2003
Notice of application for new application of premises licence at 26 Burscough Street, Ormskirk, Lancashire, L39 2ES.

We Development and Regeneration Department, West Lancashire Borough Council of 52 Derby Street, Ormskirk, Lancashire, L39 2DF have applied to West Lancashire Borough Council for Premises Licence the following has been applied for:

Hours of operation (opening Hours) 07:00 to 00:30 Sun to Wed & 7:00 to 01:30 Thu to Sat and to add the following licensable activities:
Alcohol Sale and Supply 12:00 to 00:00 Sun to Wed & 12:00 to 01:00 Thu to Sat.
Recorded Music and Film Exhibition 08:00 to 00:30 Sun to Wed & 8:00 to 01:30 Thu to Sat and
Late Night refreshment 23:00 to 00:30 Sun to Wed & 23:00 to 01:30 Thu to Sat.

The application may be inspected at West Lancashire Borough Council, Licensing Section, Robert Hodge Centre, Stanley Way, Skelmersdale, WN8 8EE, between the hours of 9.00am and 4.30pm on Monday to Friday inclusive. Brief details can be also obtained from the Councils website http://www.westlancs.gov.uk/business/licensing.aspx

Any 'interested Party' may make representations in writing to the Council regarding the application before the 29th December 2016 It is an offence, knowingly or recklessly to make a false statement in connection with an application and on summary conviction anyone doing so is liable to a fine of £5,000.

WEST LANCASHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL
NOTICE OF TENDER
TESTING OF HACKNEY CARRIAGES AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES

The Council contracts with two garages for the testing of Hackney Carriages and Private Hire vehicles to ensure their safety. This work is centred in the Ormskirk/Burscough areas and Skelmersdale.

The current contracts for this work expire on the 31st March 2017 and the Council is therefore undertaking a tender exercise for replacement contracts.

Suitably located, experienced and qualified garage owners are invited to submit tenders for these opportunities. Full details of the Council's requirements including tender documents can viewed and downloaded from The Chest internet tendering portal at www.the-chest.org.uk

Specific enquiries may be addressed to Mr Paul Charlson, Commercial, Safety & Licensing Manager, West Lancashire Borough Council, Robert Hodge Centre, Stanley Way , Skelmersdale Lancashire WN8 8EE.
Tel: 01695 585246 Email: paul.charlson@westlancs.gov.uk

Tenders must be submitted via The Chest portal no later than **12 noon on Friday 13 January 2017**

Dated: **5th December 2016**

West Lancashire Borough Council, 52 Derby Street, Ormskirk Lancashire L39 2DF www.westlancs.gov.uk

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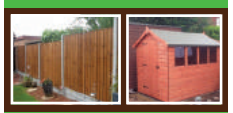

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FOR a moment I'd thought I'd wandered into the late Eighties via the medium of Christmas shopping. In the search for decent presents I'd found something I thought went out of fashion decades ago; a big record shop that actually sells records.

I still can't get my head around it. For years I thought music stores had decided en-masse that even CDs were old hat; perhaps the only way to enjoy something melodic was to stream some Calvin Harris or Little Mix directly to a chip in your brain. But there I was in HMV, perusing REM and The Stone Roses on 12-inch vinyl.

It's as though we've decided that after trying all the alternatives, the old fashioned way of doing things still works a treat. Which is why I'm delighted a new Fiesta's just been launched. Ford's weapon of choice for tight supermarket spaces might have touchscreen tech on its dashboard and the ability to park itself but it's still more *Dark Side of the Moon* than Black Eyed Peas.

The Fiesta hit the grand old age of 40 earlier this summer, and along the way it's earned its crust as the nation's best selling car. I have plenty of Fiesta moments in my own motoring back catalogue. I passed my driving test in one, years ago a few mates and I crammed into a late 1990s model for a trip to London and back for a motor show, and over the years I've driven plenty of the 1970s models and loved every minute.

Everyone bangs on about the XR2 and the RS Turbo but you'd be surprised how much fun piloting a Ford Fiesta 1.1 Popular Plus down a country lane really is.

The outgoing model is a bit like playing Queen's *News of the World* on MP3 – for all the concessions to modern technology the basics are all there, and it's still brilliant as a result. It's easy to drive and small enough to squeeze into tight spaces. It's affordable to buy, run and insure, and there are about three squillion different choices of engine and trim level so there's always one just right for you. Especially so with the Fiesta ST, which has to be one of the most enjoyable hot hatches of the past decade.

The Fiesta might have had as many regenerations as *Doctor Who* but it's about as popular for a reason. Seeing it holding onto the number one spot is as weirdly vindicating as seeing records lose out to cassettes, CDs, MP3s and streaming – only to come full circle in the shops again.

I can't wait to have a spin. Of the car that is, not my newly enlarged record collection!

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£10,037.51	£149*	£149.00	£3,651	£11,303	

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£1500* DEPOSIT CONTRIBUTION

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Amount of Credit	£13,782
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Amount of Credit	£13,596
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Interest Charges	£1,412.21
Total Amount Payable	£20,007.21
APR	3.7%

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Scrappage Allowance	£1,500
Customer Deposit	NIL
Amount of Credit	£9,862
Arrangement Fee	£149
Credit Arrangement Fee	£149
47 Monthly Payments	£149
Optional Final Payment	£3,868
Interest Charges	£1,009
Total Amount Payable	£11,169
APR	4.8%

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Customer Deposit	£189
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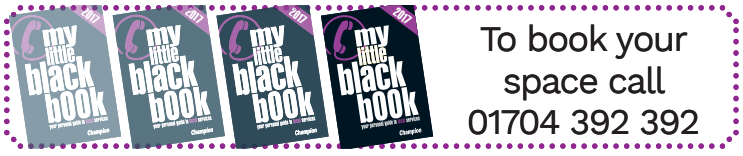

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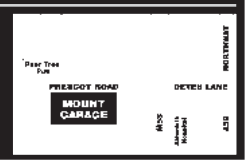

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Nevitt's late strike clinches much-needed win for Linnets

Radcliffe Borough 0
Burscough 1

BURSCOUGH'S fight to climb off the bottom of the Northern Premier League Division One North table continued with this hard-fought away win - only their second league success of the campaign.

The Linnets got off to a bright start and had the ball in the home net inside 10 minutes when Borough's Tadhg Ryan was caught out of position after failing to claim the ball mid-air only for the effort to be ruled out for offside to spare his blushes.

Burscough then wasted the first big chance of the game in the 13th minute from a corner after the ball fell to Keenan Quansan but the midfielder just couldn't direct his header on target.

Radcliffe hit back and almost took the lead when, after a lovely team move, the ball found its way to Hindle but his shot was deflected and cleared.

Burscough's first chance of the second half fell to Quansan only for his shot to force a great save by home keeper Ryan who turned it round for a corner.

Then from that resulting corner Borough captain Lassana Nalatche was called in to action to make a clearance off the line to keep the game scoreless.

As the clock ticked down to the final 15 minutes of the game it looked increasingly unlikely that either side would be able to break the deadlock with the majority of the play being centred in the middle of the park.

But just when it looked like they would have to settle for a point, Burscough grabbed what proved to be the winner in the 77th minute when substitute Elliott Nevitt struck a powerful, low shot from just inside the penalty box beyond the reach of Ryan to clinch a morale-boosting success for the visitors.

Wylie's back home - popular midfielder returns to the fold

SKELMERSDALE United have welcomed popular local lad Peter Wylie back to the club.

The right-sided midfielder *(pictured)* was registered with the club in time to be included in the squad for the trip to Barwell at the weekend.

Peter started out with Blackburn Rovers Academy, where he was a regular in the Ewood Park club's under-21 side.

He first joined, Skem - his hometown club - in the summer of 2013 after a spell on trial with Sheffield Wednesday and quickly established himself in the team.

In spring 2015 he was on the move again though to Stalybridge Celtic where then manager Liam Watson made him a big part of his National League North side.

Watson had moved to the Bower Fold outfit with the brief of saving them from relegation - a mission which was successfully accomplished.

The following season Watson took his Stalybridge team, including Wylie, to a solid position in the table.

When Watson left the Cheshire side and joined Southport in August 2016, both Wylie and present Skelmersdale assistant manager Tony Sullivan, who was coaching at Celtic, also left the club.

Wylie signed for Warrington Town while Sullivan eventually joined Skem.

So United manager Tommy Lawson and his assistant Sullivan know all about Peter Wylie and see the move as a great development as they re-build the Skelmersdale United team.

And it's a homecoming in more ways than one for Wylie who also plays cricket for Skelmersdale CC in the summer.

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Bad day at Barwell as nine-man Skem incur wrath of ref and pay the price

Barwell 4
Skelmersdale United 0

Report by **Neil Leatherbarrow**

IF referee Sarah Garratt was on any Skelmersdale Christmas card lists, it's highly unlikely that she is now!

Saturday was the third time the Coventry-based official has refereed Skem and she has now sent off three United players in that time.

Skelmersdale were already 3-0 down when the referee sent off two of their players in quick succession, as they succumbed to the physical strength of the hosts - a point manager Tommy Lawson tried to get over to Ms Garratt in the early stages of the game, only to receive a lecture from the referee in return.

Arguably, the dismissals only rubbed salt into the wounds from a Skelmersdale perspective, but this was then turned into a very sour taste 15 minutes from time, when a clear two-footed tackle on Phil Mooney was only punished by a yellow card to Barwell's Declan Towers.

After a close opening period Barwell took the lead from the penalty spot on 13 minutes.

Skem defender Phil Mooney stretched for the ball with Barwell number seven Owen Story, the latter went down and a penalty was given, Callum Ball stroking the ball home.

Midway through the half, Skelmersdale's Martin Fearon did well to deal with a half-volley from Ball, while Luke Wall had a shot at the Barwell goal that went high and wide.

On 35 minutes a long ball into the Skelmersdale area saw home striker Luke Barlone elbow Fearon in the face before having a headed goal disallowed.

Fearon required lengthy treatment on his mouth and a yellow card was shown to Barlone when a red one maybe would have been justified.

And it was Barlone who crucially doubled Barwell's advantage on 41 minutes.

The six foot-plus man won a challenge for a long ball, turned and met the ball with a dipping volley that no goalkeeper in the world would have saved.

Frustration

Two minutes later it was arguably all over. Alex Tomkinson was given too much room on the left, Fearon did a tremendous job blocking his first shot, but the rebound fell perfectly for Tomkinson who drilled the ball low into the Skelmersdale net.

Skelmersdale did quite well after the interval, although Fearon made one good save from a header, Alex Davies was only denied by an outstretched boot after his mazy run through the Barwell defence came close to dividends.

If being 3-0 down was bad enough for Skem, it got decidedly worse in the 15 minutes that followed the hour mark.

As frustration set in, Michael Grogan was issued with a red card that was perhaps justified for a challenge on Barwell's Craig Stanley.

A minute later Barwell got a fourth goal via a Brady Hickey diving header.

As the players were going back to the middle, Ms Garratt waved a red card at Max Hazeldine.

Apparently he expressed the views that many from Skelmersdale had of the officiating!

Wrong and undisciplined? Yes, but possibly understandable.

Challenge

On 75 minutes came a challenge that brought even more criticism to the referee from the visiting contingent.

Mooney won a challenge and the ball ran between him and Towers. Mooney reached the ball first and played it.

Then Towers crashed with both feet into Mooney's chest - after the match the bloodied stud marks were there for all to see as evidence.

How only a yellow card was displayed only Ms Garratt will know, especially after her earlier action against Skelmersdale.

The latter stages saw Chris Almond bring a superb diving save from home keeper Liam Castle, but really it was now a case of both sides playing out time.

Barwell were the better team and deserved to win, but sadly the game will be remembered for the performance of the referee.

Skelmersdale United: Fearon; Davies, Holden, Smith, Mooney, Grogan, Almond (c), Ince, Hazeldine, Whyte (Hodkinson, 69, Rendell, 80), Wall (Wylie, 63). Subs (not used): Jefferies, O'Reilly

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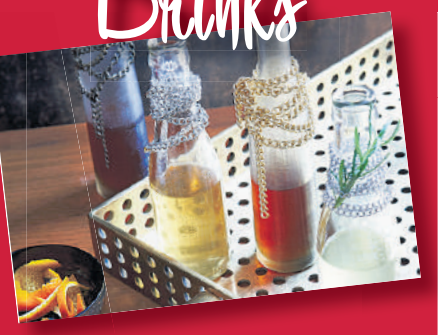
Focus on Festive Recipes

Your Champion guide to planning a Fantastic Christmas menu

Main Dishes

Sweet Treats



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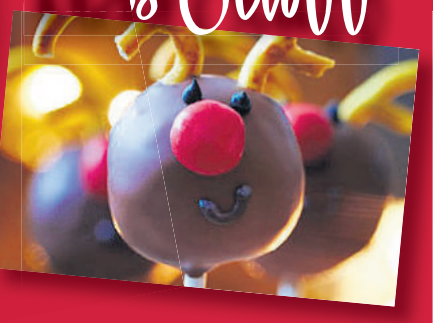

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Looking after your bird

ADVERTISING FEATURE

There is no point in adding to the general confusion of which turkey breed you should have and whether it is frozen or fresh? Undoubtedly this is down to personal choice, space and budget.
However, as most of us will have a turkey dinner here are some important do's and dont's and guidelines on defrosting and cooking times etc.

Frozen Turkeys

At least a quarter of us choose this option and there is nothing wrong in taking advantage of some of the super promotions available in freezer cabinets all round UK supermarkets. However you need to think ahead.

1/ Check that the bird you are buying will fit in the freezer space you have AND in your oven. While you are at it check you have a roasting tin big enough as well.
2/ Defrosting is a major factor in food safety at Christmas. Leave it too late and you run high risks of food poisoning. A little extra no one will thank you for it! Cooking a bird that is still partially frozen will mean uneven results as well, a waste of your time and money.
3/ Defrosting should be done in a cold place like the fridge if at all possible but must be separated from other foods to avoid cross contamination. Make sure the bird sits on a dish large and deep enough to catch thawing juices.
4/ Work out defrosting times. A large turkey may well take two or three days to thaw out. Ideally when you start the process take the turkey out of any packaging, put it on a large dish and cover. Remove giblets and neck as soon as you can, that will speed the thawing process further.
5/ Before cooking check that there are no ice crystals in the body cavity. Test thicker parts of the turkey with a sharp knife to ensure the meat is not frozen.
6/ When you pour away the thawing liquid, do NOT splash any of it on surfaces. This is essential to avoid food poisoning at all costs.

Thawing Times

In a fridge at 4º C (39 F) allow 10 to 12 hours per kilo. Your fridge however may be a different temperature.
In a cool room (below 17.5ºC, 64F) three to four hours per kilo
At room temperature (20ºC or 68F) two hours per kilo should do it.

Finally when fully defrosted, store in fridge until ready to cook.

Cooking Turkeys

A large bird can take hours to cook properly and the cooking times below are based on an unstuffed bird. It is always better to cook the stuffing separately for accuracy of those guidelines below. If you decide to cook the bird stuffed you MUST add extra time to the cooking.
As a general guidance in an oven preheated to 180º C
(350F, GM 4)
Allow 45 minutes per kg plus 20 minutes for a turkey under 4.5kg
Allow 40 minutes per kg for a turkey that's between 4.5kg and 6.5kg
Allow 35 minutes per kg for a turkey of more than 6.5kg

Cook with foil during the cooking time and uncover for the last 30 minutes for browning. Baste every hour.

As soon as you place the turkey in the oven jot down the time, it is easy to lose track on Christmas day of what is happening...

As far as leftovers are concerned you should cool them as fast as you can and store them in the fridge covered for up to 48 hours. It is therefore best to buy a bird that is not so big after all.

(Information on www.nhs.uk)

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Main Event

For those who want to give turkey a rest or are looking for some new ideas, this section is for you. We are looking at possible alternatives to the more traditional fayre.

Brazil Nut Roast

About 6 servings
Costs approx £10 to £12 to make
Quite easy
Freezable

Meat free alternative and packed with goodness and flavour, this loaf is best served with a thick vegetable gravy and the loaf itself is freezable so you can make it well ahead of the day. Just freeze before baking in a freezer bag and defrost thoroughly.

YOU WILL NEED

200g (7oz) Brazil nuts, chopped
30g (1oz) butter
1 onion, finely chopped
2 carrots, peeled and finely chopped
1 stick celery, finely chopped
1 green chilli, deseeded and chopped
100g (3.5oz) mature Cheddar cheese
2 medium eggs
50g (1.75oz) fresh white breadcrumbs
2 tbsps chopped fresh parsley
1 tbsp chopped fresh thyme
Finely grated rind of 1 lemon
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
500g (1lb) loaf tin, buttered and lined with a strip of baking parchment

WHAT TO DO

Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4.
Reserve about 2 tablespoons nuts and spread the rest out on a baking sheet. Roast them in the oven for 5-10 minutes until they start to turn golden, then remove from oven.

Melt the butter in a frying pan and add the onion. Cook for about 5 minutes over a medium heat until it starts to soften, then add the carrot, celery and chilli to the pan and cook for a further 5-7 minutes until the vegetables soften. Tip them into a bowl.
Reserve about 2-3 tablespoons of the cheese. Add the rest to the vegetables, along with the nuts, eggs, breadcrumbs, parsley, thyme and lemon rind. Season well.
Spoon the mixture into the prepared tin and sprinkle over the reserved nuts and cheese. Bake in the centre of the oven for 35-45 minutes, or until golden brown and just firm to the touch in the centre. Remove loaf from oven and leave it to cool in the tin for about 5 minutes before turning it out and slicing, to serve with gravy, if you like.

Beef Wellington

4 servings
Approx £ 35 to £40
Moderately easy
Not for the freezer

This Gordon Ramsay recipe strips away the reputation of difficulty Wellingtons have. It does work well and takes just twenty minutes to make. It is not cheap but well worth doing.

YOU WILL NEED

400g flat cap mushrooms, roughly chopped
sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
olive oil, for cooking
750g piece of prime beef fillet
1-2tbsp English mustard
6-8 slices of Parma ham
500g ready-made puff pastry
flour, to dust
2 egg yolks, beaten

WHAT TO DO

Put the mushrooms into a food processor with some seasoning and pulse to a rough paste. Scrape the paste into a pan and cook over a high heat for about 10 mins, tossing frequently, to cook out the moisture from the mushrooms. Spread out on a plate to cool.
Heat a frying pan and add a little olive oil. Season the beef and sear in the hot pan for 30 secs only on each side. (You don't want to cook it at this stage, just colour it). Remove the beef from the pan and leave to cool, then brush all over with the mustard.
Lay a sheet of cling film on a work surface and arrange the Parma ham slices on it, in slightly overlapping rows. With a palette knife, spread the mushroom paste over the ham, then place the seared beef fillet in the middle. Keeping a tight hold of the cling film from the edge, neatly roll the Parma ham and mushrooms around the beef to form a tight barrel shape. Twist the ends of the cling film to secure. Chill for 15-20 mins to allow the beef to set and keep its shape.
Roll out the puff pastry on a floured surface to a large rectangle, the thickness of a £1 coin. Remove the cling film from the beef, then lay in the centre. Brush the surrounding pastry with egg yolk. Fold the ends over, then wrap the pastry around the beef, cutting off any excess. Turn over, so the seam is underneath, and place on a baking sheet lined with baking parchment. Brush over all the pastry with egg and chill for about 15 mins to let the pastry rest.
Heat the oven to 200C, 400F, gas 6. Lightly score the pastry at 1cm intervals and glaze again with beaten egg yolk. Bake for 20 minutes, then lower the oven setting to 180C, 350F, gas 4 and cook for another 15 mins. Allow to rest for 10-15 mins before slicing and serving with the side dishes of your choice. The beef should still be pink in the centre when you serve it.

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ADVERTISING FEATURE

Proper Pies

Closer to the time, it will pay off to have some standbys ready for the whole family in the freezer. Pies are always welcome and this lot would be wonderful on a busy night like Christmas Eve for an informal supper.

Proper Fish Pie

About ten servings
Approx £20 to make
Easy
Freezable

YOU WILL NEED
Topping:
1.5 kg potatoes chopped in chunks
50g butter

Filling:
1.5ltr Full Fat Milk
800g skinless white fish
600g smoked skinless Haddock fillet
1 onion, quartered
2 bay leaves
140g butter
14g plain flour
nutmeg to season
small bunch of parsley finely chopped
200g cooked, peeled prawns
6 eggs, hard boiled and quartered (DO NOT USE IF YOU ARE FREEZING AS EGGS CANNOT BE FROZEN)

WHAT TO DO
Simmer the potatoes for about 20 mins until tender, then drain and mash with most of the butter, plenty of seasoning and a little milk. Season and set aside.
Meanwhile, cut the fish into 2cm cubes. Bring the milk just to a simmer in a large frying pan – when you see a few small bubbles, add the fish, onion and bay leaves, then cover and cook for 6-8 mins. Lift the fish out onto a plate and strain the milk into a jug.
Melt the butter in a pan, stir in the flour and cook for 1 min over a medium heat. Take off the heat, pour in a little poaching milk, then stir until blended. Continue to add the milk gradually, mixing well until you have a smooth sauce. Return to the heat, bring to the boil, then simmer for 5 mins, stirring continuously, until it coats the back of a spoon. Remove from the heat, season with salt, pepper and nutmeg, then mix in the parsley.
Heat oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6. Divide the fish between your oven dishes (foil or otherwise) and strain any juices into the sauce. Scatter over the prawns, then add the eggs to both dishes if using.
Pour the sauce over both. Spoon half of the mash over one dish so it covers everything, making sure it reaches the sides. Rough up the top with a fork and dot with remaining butter.
Cool And Freeze
Once defrosted, bake for 30 mins until the top is golden.

(www.bbcgoodfood.com)

Proper Chicken Pie

About 6 servings
Approx £9.00 to make
Easy
Freezable

YOU WILL NEED
1.4kg chicken
1 of each (carrot, onion and celery stick)
50g butter
2 leeks sliced
2 tbsp plain flour
grated zest 1 lemon
large bunch parsley chopped
3 tbsp crème fraîche
250g ready-made puff pastry beaten egg or milk, to glaze
Bouquet Garni

WHAT TO DO
Put the chicken in a pan, which is large enough to take it snugly. Roughly chop the carrot, onion and celery and tuck around the chicken with the bouquet garni. Pour in enough water to come just over halfway up the chicken, then season with salt and pepper. Bring to the boil, then reduce the heat, cover tightly and simmer gently for 1-1¼ hrs, until the chicken is well cooked.
Carefully lift the chicken out onto a board lined with kitchen paper to absorb any stock that leaks out. Then strain the stock, discarding the veggies, and measure 500ml into a jug – any extra you can cool and freeze for another time.
Heat the oven to 200C/fan 180C/gas 6. Strip the meat from the chicken, discarding the skin and bones. Cut the meat into large chunks and put into a 1-litre pie dish.
Melt the butter in a pan, add the leeks and fry until starting to soften. Sift in the flour and cook for 1 min. Gradually stir in the stock, cooking until the sauce is smooth and glossy. Take off the heat and add lemon, parsley and crème fraîche. Season.
Pour the sauce over the chicken and leave to cool.
Roll out the pastry and trim to 5cm larger than the pie dish. Brush the edge of the dish with water. Lay the pastry on the pie, tucking the edges under to make a double layer around the rim. Press the pastry edge to seal it. Roll out any trimmings to make leaves for the top.
Freeze When Cool
When defrosted, brush the pastry with milk or egg and bake for 30-35 mins until the pastry is golden.

(www.bbcgoodfood.com)

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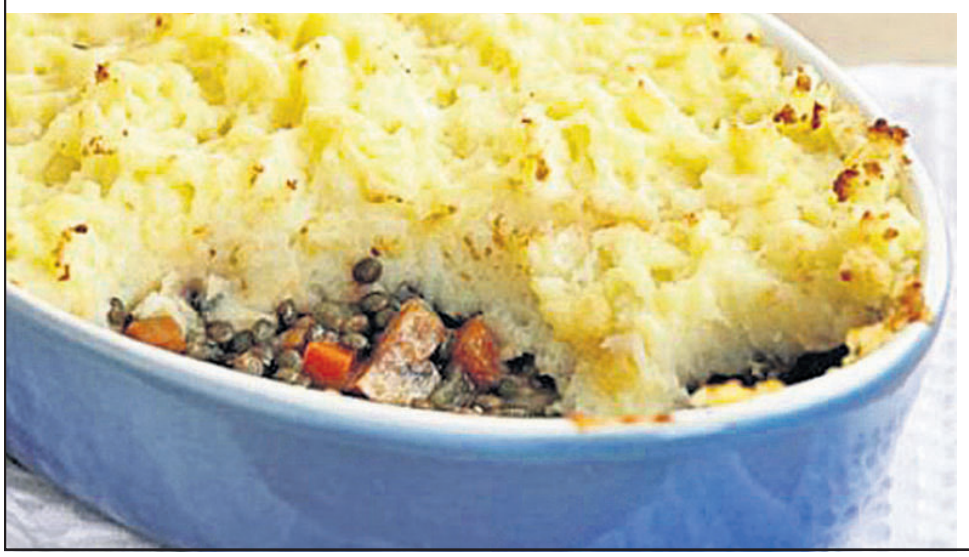
YOU WILL NEED
For the lentil sauce:
50g butter
2 onions, chopped
4 carrots, diced
1 head of celery, chopped
4 garlic cloves, finely chopped
200g pack chestnut mushroom, sliced
2 bay leaves
1 tbsp dried thyme
500g pack dried green lentil (we used Merchant Gourmet Puy lentils)
100ml red wine (optional)
1.7 ltr vegetable stock
3 tbsp tomato purée
For the topping:
2kg floury potatoes

WHAT TO DO:
To make the sauce, heat the butter in a pan, then gently fry the onions, carrots, celery and garlic for 15 mins until soft and golden. Turn up the heat, add the mushrooms, then cook for 4 mins more. Stir in the herbs, then add the lentils. Pour over the wine and stock – it's important that you do not season with salt at this stage. Simmer for 40-50 mins until the lentils are very soft. Now season to taste, take off heat, then stir in the tomato purée.
While the lentils are cooking, tip the potatoes into a pan of water, then boil for about 15 mins until tender. Drain well, mash with the butter and milk, then season with salt and pepper.
To assemble the pies, divide the lentil mixture between all the dishes that you are using, then top with mash. Scatter over the cheese, cool and freeze.
When defrosted, heat oven to 190C/fan 170C/gas 5, then bake for 30 mins until the topping is golden.

(www.bbcgoodfood.com)



Dessert

White Chocolate & Almond Black Forest Cake

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Ready in 1 Hour 30 Minutes
Serves 15
Easy
Prepare ahead
Freeze (un-iced sponges)

YOU WILL NEED
350g unsalted butter (Room Temp)
350g golden caster sugar
6 large eggs
400g self-raising flour
100g ground almonds
200g white chocolate, grated
150ml soured cream
For the decoration
300g white cooking chocolate, broken into squares
1 tsp vegetable oil
For the filling
600ml double cream
500g Greek Yogurt
1 tbsp vanilla bean paste
50g icing sugar, sifted
4 tbsp kirsch
2 x 425g cans of pitted cherries, drained
1 tbsp edible sparkle dust
Fresh cherries (optional)
You will need
2 x 23cm round cake tins, greased and lined with baking parchment

WHAT TO DO
Heat the oven to 150C fan, gas 3. Beat together the butter and sugar until pale and fluffy. Gradually whisk in the eggs then fold in the flour, ground almonds, white chocolate and soured cream. Divide the mixture between the tins. Spread level and bake for 45 minutes until risen and firm to the touch. Remove from the tins and leave to cool on a wire rack.
To make the chocolate curls, melt the white chocolate with the vegetable oil in a bowl over a pan of simmering water until smooth. Pour into a clean airtight tub and chill for 1 hour until firm. Remove the chocolate onto a piece of baking parchment. Drag a cheese slicer over to create chunky curls. Set aside.
For the filling, whip the cream until just thick enough to form soft peaks. Fold in the Greek yogurt, vanilla bean paste and icing sugar. Cut the cakes in half horizontally. Put one layer on a cake stand or plate, drizzle over 1 tbsp kirsch, spread with a quarter of the vanilla cream and scatter a third of the cherries over the top.
Repeat, layering up the sponges. Put the final layer on top and spread with the remaining cream. Sprinkle with edible sparkle dust and decorate with chocolate curls and fresh cherries, if using.

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Sweet Treats

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Christmas being associated with all things sweet is not new. And temptation is high at this time of the year but for those of us who want to create our own treats there are plenty of opportunities in doing just that. Here are a few ideas...

Christmas Cake

There is still plenty of time for this recipe from Jane Asher. The results are fantastic and no one will ever guess that the cake has not had weeks to develop its wonderful flavours. For its topping you can use white marzipan and ready roll icing for speed. Just brush a little clear jam (apricot is good) on cake surface and sides and roll out a large disc of white marzipan, using icing sugar on the working surface and the rolling pin. Lift the marzipan disc with the rolling pin and place it gently on the sticky cake. If you can, leave it be for a day or so then repeat same procedure with the icing.

A lot of servings!
Approx £16.00 to make
Easy-ish
NOT freezable but keeps a long time as long as it is not iced or marzipaned

YOU WILL NEED

750g mixed dried fruit
150g glacé cherries
225ml stout, (Guinness, for example)
100ml whiskey
75ml orange juice
1 orange, zest only
2tbsp black treacle
200g butter, slightly soft
200g muscovado sugar
250g plain flour
1 heaped tsp baking powder
5 eggs, lightly beaten
1.1/2tsp mixed spice
75g brazil nuts or almonds chopped

WHAT TO DO

Place the dried fruits, cherries, stout, whisky, orange juice, zest and treacle into a large pan and bring to the boil, stirring. Simmer gently for 10 minutes, then remove from the heat and allow to cool completely. Preferably, transfer to a bowl and chill overnight - but don't worry if you can't, just leave it soaking as long as you can.

Preheat the oven to 140C/gas 2.

Lightly grease a 20cm round cake tin and line with baking parchment or a shaped silicone sheet.

Place all the remaining ingredients except the nuts in a mixing bowl and mix thoroughly. Beat until smooth, then fold in the soaked fruit and the nuts.

Spoon into the prepared tin and level the top, making a slight dip towards the centre. Bake for 3 hours, then check and cover the top with more paper or silicone if it is over-browning. Bake for a further 30 minutes-1 hour, or until a knife inserted in the centre comes out clean.

Allow to cool for 10 minutes or so in the tin, then turn out and allow to cool completely on a rack.

Wrap the cake in baking parchment and then in foil, and store in a tin somewhere cool and dry until it's time to decorate it. Every couple of weeks (or more often, if you're short of time), unwrap the cake, make a few holes in the top with a skewer, spoon a little brandy or whisky over the top and let it soak in. This keeps the cake moist - and makes it taste even better. You can use orange juice if you're avoiding too much alcohol. Rewrap the cake and store.

(www.goodfood.uktv.co.uk)

THREE SPEEDY DECORATIONS FOR THE CAKE

Once iced, you will want your cake to look good. Here are three easy ideas:

Midwinter Cake

The cake sides are covered with cinammon sticks and tied with a ribbon. Traditionally the top is decorated with sprigs of rosemary and bay leaves and candles but for safety's sake replace the candles with a string of battery operated LED tea lights.

Let It Glow

Use 3 or 4 paper doilies and make them into cones, securing with sticky tape. Place on top of LED lights.

Glitter Snowflakes

Using snowflake cutters, cut out a few different sized snowflakes from white rolled out icing. Brush each top with egg white and sprinkle or dip immediately in preserving or granulated sugar. Add a little edible glitter if you have some. Stick the flakes on the cake randomly. Leave to set.

(www.bbcgoodfood.co.uk)

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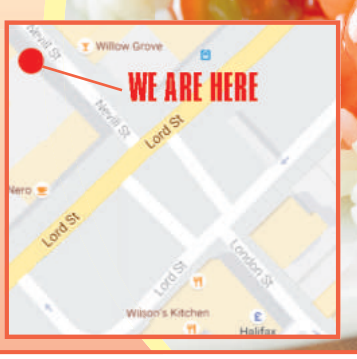

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ADVERTISING FEATURE

What's in a Glass

Fun at Christmas can even apply to drinks and if you want some real alternatives that will make you stand out from the crowd, here are a few suggestions. You may have to seek some of those suggestions online but we checked that they are all easily available...

Top Five Unusual Bottles

The Kings Ginger

Around £25 for 700ml

Nothing says more Christmas than ginger and the flavours here are top notch. It's love at first sniff with aromas of ginger, lemons, sherbet and golden syrup followed by ginger and lemon tart on the palate. Absolutely delicious!

Frangelico

Around £20 for 700ml

If you have never tasted Frangelico, you are in for a real treat (so long as you like hazelnuts). This liqueur can be added to a coffee or a cocktail though straight is the only way to get to its mix of hazelnuts, cocoa and vanilla beans. Great with Christmas pudding or cake.

St Germain

Around £15 for 500ml

This is a great base elderflower liqueur that works well in simpler cocktails. Just mix it with prosecco and a dash of sparkling water for a sophisticated yet light alcoholic beverage. Also great with a lesser champagne. St Germain was named by the New York Times as the most influential cocktail component of the decade and to try it is to love it. A beautiful bottle too.

Briottet Liqueur De Violette

Around £22 for 700ml

Quite simply Parma Violets in a glass. This gorgeous lilac coloured liqueur is beautiful on its own or with a dash of gin. Great in a champagne cocktail as well and you can up the sophistication level by adding a few edible flowers too.

Edinburgh Gin Rhubarb And Ginger Liqueur

Around £18 for 500ml

This gin has a delicate rose colour and an intense rhubarb scent with a ginger heat on the palate. Made in Scotland it is absolutely wonderful as an alternative gin with classic mixers or part of a champagne cocktail.

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Down with the Kids

Christmas is a season that children love... And they can help in the kitchen too. Here are a few suggestions to busy the little ones with almost guaranteed results...

Candy Cane Lollipops

Easy to make and ever so pretty... A last minute, ready to eat, gift

YOU WILL NEED:
12 peppermint candy canes
200g white chocolate,
chopped edible sprinkles
6 ovenproof lolly sticks (available online)
cellophane bags and ribbons (if giving as a gift)

WHAT TO DO
Heat oven to 180C/160C fan/gas 4 and line two baking sheets with baking parchment.
Arrange the candy canes in pairs on the trays, to make heart shapes. Put a lolly stick between each one, where they meet at the bottom. Put the trays in the oven and cook for 5 mins.
The candy canes should now be soft enough for you to carefully pinch together where they join at the top and the bottom, around the stick. Be careful as the canes will be extremely hot, but work quickly or they will cool and set and you won't be able to pinch them together.
Melt the chocolate in a bowl over a pan of barely simmering water, or in the microwave. Spoon the melted chocolate into the middle of the heart lollies, pushing it out to fill the spaces.
Scatter over your choice of sprinkles, then leave to cool completely.
When set, peel off the baking parchment, wrap in cellophane bags and tie with a ribbon to give as a gift.

Rudolf On A Stick

Fabulous to do and eat too.

YOU WILL NEED:
150g chocolate cake
25g soft butter
50g icing sugar
25g plain chocolate
100g milk chocolate
small pretzels, broken into large 'antler' shape pieces
8 small jelly sweets, red chocolate beans or Smarties
2 tbsp royal icing coloured black
8 cake pop sticks and a polystyrene block to stand up the cake pops

WHAT TO DO
Crumble the cake into fine crumbs using your hands or in a food processor. Put into a bowl.
In another bowl, beat together the butter and icing sugar until creamy.
Melt the plain chocolate in the microwave or in a bowl over a pan of barely simmering water. Add the melted chocolate to the butter mixture and combine well. Add this to the cake crumbs and mix thoroughly using your hands, until it sticks together.
Divide the mixture into eight and shape each one into a smooth ball.
Insert a cake pop stick, place on a tray lined with baking parchment and chill for at least 2 hours. Melt the milk chocolate in the microwave or in a bowl over a pan of barely simmering water.
Take a cake pop and dip in the chocolate. Shake gently until the excess has drained off. Push into a polystyrene block.

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Gingerbread Men

As traditional as it comes, these are easy to make at any age. And as they are so delicious and cheap to make, you will probably find your little ones wanting to make more very soon!

YOU WILL NEED:
140g unsalted butter
100g dark muscovado sugar
3 tbsp golden syrup
350g plain flour
1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
2 tsp ground ginger and 1 tsp ground cinnamon, a pinch of cayenne pepper (optional)
2 balls stem ginger from a jar, chopped
TO DECORATE
50g icing sugar a few glacé cherries
2 balls stem ginger

WHAT TO DO
Heat oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6.
Line 2 baking sheets with baking parchment.
Melt butter, sugar and syrup in a pan.
Mix flour, soda, spices and a pinch of salt in a bowl.
Stir in the butter mix and chopped ginger to make a stiff-ish dough.
Wait until cool enough to handle, then roll out dough to about 5mm thick.
Stamp out gingerbread men, re-rolling and pressing the trimmings back together and rolling again.
Lift onto baking sheets. Bake for 12 mins until golden. Cool 10 mins on the sheets, then lift onto cooling racks.
To decorate, mix icing sugar with a few drops of water until thick and smooth.
Halve and slice cherries thinly to make smiles, and cut ginger into small squares.
Spoon icing into a food bag, snip off the tiniest bit from one corner, then squeeze eyes and buttons, and a tiny smile onto 1 man at a time.
Stick on a cherry smile and ginger buttons.
Repeat; leave to set. Will keep up to 1 week in an airtight tin.

(www.bbcgoodfood.com)

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